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Meter in Catullan invective: expectations and innovation

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BOSTON UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

Dissertation

METER IN CATULLAN INVECTIVE: EXPECTATIONS AND INNOVATION

by

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METER IN CATULLAN INVECTIVE: EXPECTATIONS AND INNOVATION

(Order No.)

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the place of Catullus' poetry in the iambic tradition and its innovation within that tradition. By the Classical period, the genre *iambos* had been distilled down to invective content in iambic meters, despite the much greater variety of features found in the canonical Archaic iambographers (particularly Archilochus and Hipponax, 7th-6th C BCE). Catullus, familiar with these poets not only in their own right but also through the lens of Hellenistic authors such as Callimachus, partakes in and expands this tradition in novel ways.

Catullus affirms the connection between invective and iambic meters in some of his poems (25, 29, 37, 39, 52, 59, 60). In others, he subverts his readers' expectations, creating mismatches between meter and content. He employs iambic meters without invective content once in iambic trimeters (4) and in half of his choliambic poems (8, 22, 31, 44). Conversely, he uses unaccustomed meters for invective, including hendecasyllables and elegiac couplets. Scholarly efforts to explain the mismatch of meter and content in Catullus' invective-free iambic poems and in his invective poems in

other meters have largely been piecemeal; this study represents a more sustained approach to the problem.

I argue in Chapter One that the speed of the skiff in poem 4 enables it to outpace obstacles representing *iambos*' traditionally dominant feature, invective; against generic expectations, Catullus introduces speed as a pointed alternative to abusive content.

Chapter Two demonstrates that Catullus employs his non-abusive choliambic poems in the diagnosis of literary-critical and medical problems, tapping into a strain of aesthetic criticism and complaint found in Callimachus' *Iamboi* and in Hipponax himself. Chapter Three presents Catullus' hendecasyllables as a flexible meter without a strong ethos, allowing Catullus to link it to both the iambic tradition and love poetry. Finally, Chapter Four explores Catullus' use of elegiac epigram as an open form primarily for invective, matching the longstanding but uneasy coupling of hexameter and pentameter to vignettes of unbalanced relationships. With carefully considered mismatches of form and content, Catullus extends *iambos* beyond tradition.

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List of Abbreviations

- DK* Diels, Hermann & Walther Kranz (1954 [1903]) (eds.), *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker. Griechisch und deutsch*, 7th ed. (Berlin: Weidmann).
- GLK* Keil, Heinrich (1855-1923) (ed.), *Grammatici Latini*, 8 vols. (Leipzig: Teubner).
- L&S* Lewis, Charlton T. & Charles Short (1969 [1879]) (eds.), *A Latin Dictionary* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press).
- LSJ* Liddell, Henry George & Robert Scott (1968 [1843]) (eds.), *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 9th ed. with supplement, rev. Henry Stuart Jones (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press).
- OCD* Hornblower, Simon & Anthony Spawforth (2010) (eds.), *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 4th ed. (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press).
- ODLT* Baldick, Chris (2008 [1990]), *The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, 3rd ed. (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press).
- OED* Simpson, John & Edmund Weiner (1989 [1884]) (eds.), *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed. (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press).
- OLD* Glare, P.G.W. (1996 [1982]) (ed.), *The Oxford Latin Dictionary*, corrected ed. (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press).
- W* West, Martin L. (1989, 1992 [1971, 1972]) (ed.), *Iambi et elegi graeci ante Alexandrum cantati*, vols. 1 & 2, 2nd edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

Introduction

Invective is a fundamental component of the poetry of C. Valerius Catullus.¹ A willingness to attack enemies both personal and public is as integral to Catullus' poetic self-presentation as is his affair with Lesbia. Invective content and iambic meters were closely aligned in the genre *iambos*, beginning from the poems of Archilochus in the 7th century BCE. By Aristotle's time (4th century BCE), however, *iambos* had become a marginalized genre. In the *Poetics*² Aristotle considers dramatic comedy the natural and superior heir to the blame poetry (ψόγος) with which *iambos* was closely associated. In giving genre a teleological aim, he relegates *iambos* to the status of a minor genre.³ Despite this schematized disdain for the genre, *iambos* underwent a revival in the Hellenistic period, both in the collection and arrangement of the Archaic iambic poets and in new attempts at developing the genre. By embracing Hellenistic (and particularly Callimachean) interests, including metrical and generic variety and a preference for the short and refined over the long and derivative, Catullan invective found its expression in personal poetry rather than in drama or prose (rhetoric being, arguably, Roman invective's most fertile ground).⁴

¹ Some critics have been uncomfortable with that fact to varying degrees. Fordyce 1961 omits a number of "unsuitable" poems due to obscenity (not invective, per se, but often present in invective poems), and Quinn 1972, p. 277, relegated the majority of the invective poems to lower "levels of intent" than others, particularly the Lesbia cycle. See Tatum 2007, pp. 333-334.

² 1448b-1449b, where he fails even to mention Archilochus.

³ He instead discusses the mock-epic *Margites* as a superior model, though in fact it is neither particularly psogic in comparison with *iambos*—Aristotle himself acknowledges in the same passage that it is an example of the laughable (τὸ γελοῖον), not *psogos*—nor even written by Homer (an attribution that doubtless was highly influential to Aristotle). Its main connection with *iambos* is that iambic meters were interspersed among its dactylic hexameters. See Rotstein 2010, pp. 61-110, esp. 98-104, who notes that Aristotle considers it and *iambos* both to be *psogos*, but not the same genre.

⁴ This is not to say that rhetoric and poetry were mutually exclusive; other *poetae novi* such as C. Licinius Calvus straddled both worlds, writing invective poetry like Catullus while maintaining a career as an

In this dissertation I explore the dynamic and creative relationship between meter and invective content—or a lack of invective content—in the Catullan corpus. In general I take it as a given (though not an unexamined one) that meter is vitally important to genre. As Hooley puts it, the Romans

... thought of [poetry] in terms of ‘kinds’ of verse modalities, genres, configurations or groupings of customary elements – particular meters, conventional characters or figures, certain understandings about what could be expected of such figures, common assumptions about the degree of seriousness expected of poems within given genres. A given poem ... was always contextualized or conditioned by what readers could expect once they recognized its literary kind.⁵

A Roman author would thus be quite deliberate in matching meter to theme, whether in following or consciously breaking with convention. As Morgan suggests, “Roman metrification is never anything other than an intensely considered ... exercise.”⁶ This would doubtless be overstating the case for some authors,⁷ but for Catullus and the other *poetae novi*, with their keen interest in the Alexandrian tradition of generic and metrical categorization (see pp. 4-10 below), it rings true, particularly since the *poetae novi* would have likely been each other’s most constructively critical readers.⁸

advocate. Calvus in particular was known for his vituperative speeches against Vatinius (cf. Catullus’ poem 53).

⁵ Hooley 2007, p. 33.

⁶ Morgan 2010b, p. 31. See also Morgan 2000, 2007, 2010a, and 2012, all of which, although they are on diverse subjects, share at their core the same thesis.

⁷ Cf. Katz 2011: “surely meter cannot matter equally much to all poems in all genres all the time.” This intuitively seems at least partially correct, though I would rephrase it to suggest that meter cannot matter equally to all *poets*. Genre and meter are closely tied together by usage and theory, each of which feeds into the other. It seems absurd to think that a Volusius or a Suffenus writing annalistic epic in dactylic hexameter would think of it as “an intensely considered ... exercise,” and much more likely that they would think “epic is in dactylic hexameter” and have done with it.

⁸ Cf. Catullus’ poem 50, which describes attempts at different meters by Catullus and Calvus; poem 95, in pointed praise of Cinna’s *Zmyrna*; and poem 35, politely pressing Caecilius to keep working on his poem about the *Magna Mater*.

The personal poetic genre *iambos* is overwhelmingly written in and associated with iambic meters and invective content.⁹ This association is due partially to the fact that the earliest and most famous iambic poets (Archilochus, Semonides, and Hipponax) all wrote invective, but much more to the biographical tradition that tended to downplay other characteristics in those same poets' oeuvres in favor of their abusive power (for example in the oft-repeated stories that Archilochus and Hipponax each drove their targets to suicide through no means other than the shame their poetry caused). The Hellenistic poets who take up the genre share an acknowledgement of this tradition, even though they may change key aspects: so although Callimachus in his *Iamboi* deviates from Archaic iambic invective in some ways, he uses iambic meters and acknowledges the association of *iambos* and invective even as he pays lip service to denying his own participation in the invective part of that tradition.¹⁰

Catullus closely follows the generic convention of invective in iambic meters in poems 25 (iambic tetrameter catalectic), 29 and 52 (iambic trimeters), and 37, 39, 59 and 60 (choliamb, a "limping" variant on the iambic trimeter).¹¹ Meter and meaning are thus

⁹ Personal as opposed to drama; poetic as opposed to prose genres. When dramatic poetry has invective, it is usually in comedy; when prose does, it is typically in speeches. I leave aside the question of the circumstances of iambic performance, as it is not only unclear (possibly rhapsodic: see Lavigne 2005, pp. 12-57; sympotic: Gentili 1988, pp. 34-35; or perhaps performed at a festival: Carey 2009, p. 160), but doubtless has little to do with the performance context of either the Hellenistic or Roman writers of *iambos* (for poetic performance at the end of the Republic and beginning of the Empire see Quinn 1982). The strength of the associations of iambic meters, invective, and *iambos* is delineated in Rotstein 2010.

¹⁰ Particularly in *Iambos* 1, where Callimachus speaks in the persona of Hipponax risen from the grave and φέρων ἱαμβον οὐ μάχην αἰδόντα / τὴν Βουπάλειον ("bearing *iambos* not singing the battle with Bupalus," ll. 3-4), yet then is immediately critical of his audience. As Acosta-Hughes 2002, p. 40, suggests, "[t]he speaker who presents himself so assertively ... announces that his is both the voice of Hipponax and is not, that those who are to attend to his words are to hear Hipponax, but not the verses of Hipponax." What seems like a *recusatio* for not performing invective is instead a *recusatio* for not being the genuine work of Hipponax.

¹¹ Heyworth 2001, pp. 118-119, lists these same poems, denying that literary criticism counts as invective (Tatum 2007 makes no such distinction).

in generic alignment for these poems, and this serves as an acknowledgement on Catullus' part that he and his readers know how the genre traditionally works.

I explore reasons for the deliberate contravention of this connection in two major subsets of Catullus' poems: those in iambic meters but lacking invective, and those with invective in the most common non-iambic meters. These include hendecasyllables (poems 6, 10, 12, 15, 16, 21, 23, 24, 26, 28, 33, 36, 40-43, 47, 49, 53, 54, 56, 57, 58a, and fr. 3 all exhibit some degree of invective) and epigrammatic¹² elegiac couplets (poems 69, 71, 74, 78a-81, 83-84, 86, 88-91, 93-95, 97, 98, 103, 105, 106, 108, and 110-116 are all invectives; of the eighteen not on this list, eleven involve at least a sense of bitterness or complaint, also common in Archaic *iambos*). To make sense of what seems like a metrical and generic mishmash, it is useful to gain context by describing the conditions and conventions under which Catullus and his contemporaries, the *poetae novi*, were writing.

Invective and the Poetae Novi

Catullus and his fellow *poetae novi* ("new poets") lived and wrote in and around Rome in the 1st C. BCE, a time of great upheaval, civil and foreign wars, and territorial expansion, culminating in the end of the Roman Republic and the reign of Augustus as *princeps*. The *poetae novi* were thus uniquely situated in the period before the restriction of Republican free speech (*libertas*) to use personal invective in their poetry, naming powerful men under their own names or thinly-veiled pseudonyms, without the

¹² That is, not counting poems 65-68.

expectation of violent reprisal. We see this by contrast with the historian Cremutius Cordus, who under Tiberius' reign was forced by Sejanus to commit suicide for praising two of Caesar's murderers, Brutus and Cassius; Tacitus *Annales* 4.35 reports that in his self-defense Cordus mentioned the invectives of Furius Bibaculus and Catullus as having engendered no reprisals from Caesar.¹³ This loss of *libertas* is also apparent in Roman satire, beginning with Horace: "the issues raised by free speech are concentrated around the terms *libertas* and *licentia*, where *libertas* is used to denote an exercise of freedom of which the speaker approves, while *licentia* denotes an exercise of freedom of which the speaker does not approve."¹⁴ The satirists play with the tension between the terms; Catullus mentions neither word, and it is clear (especially from his attacks on Caesar) that whatever the other anxieties he betrays in his poetry, a loss of *libertas* is not one of them.

Not all of the *poetae novi* are known to have taken advantage of the opportunity to perform personal invective, but Catullus and C. Licinius Calvus (mentioned together by many later authors) certainly did so.¹⁵ The poet Q. Cornificius, the addressee of Catullus' poem 38, is said to have called his deserting soldiers *galeatos lepores* just before his death, though this is reported situational invective rather than poetry.¹⁶ If

¹³ See McHugh 2004, pp. 399-403.

¹⁴ Braund 2004, p. 409, with further references.

¹⁵ Catullus names Calvus as, in effect, a writing partner (not in the sense of a co-author, but someone with whom he trades poems written on the spot) in poem 50; they are paired by Horace (*Satire* 1.10.19), Propertius (2.25.4), Ovid (*Amores* 3.9.62), Pliny the Younger (*Epistle* 1.16.5), and Aulus Gellius (*Attic Nights* 19.9.7).

¹⁶ See Hollis' commentary on Cinna fr. 15 (Hollis 2007, pp. 17, 46, and 149-151).

Furius Bibaculus can be considered a “new poet,” he too wrote iambic poetry noted for its *acerbitas*, according to Quintilian.¹⁷

Who were the *poetae novi*, and what place does invective have in their works?

The term, like their alternate names οἱ νεώτεροι (usually rendered in English as “neoterics” rather than “neoteri”) and the dismissive *cantores Euphorionis*, comes from Cicero and has been applied—not without certain misgivings—to Catullus and the circle of his contemporaries, whose names often appear in Catullus’ and each other’s works.¹⁸ Only νεώτεροι has earlier currency; it was used by scholiasts to refer to poets in general or specifically epic poets who are both chronologically later than and derivative of Homer.¹⁹ Cicero uses it in reference to the σπονδειαζόντα hexameter line he composes for Atticus’ amusement, *flavit ab Epiro lenissimus Onchesmites*, indicating that a spondaic fifth foot is characteristic of the νεώτεροι. He also implies that they trafficked in the obscure: his final two feet consist of a new coinage in four long syllables, *Onchesmites*, referring to a southwesterly wind from Onchesmus, the harbor at Epirus.²⁰

¹⁷ Quintilian 10.1.96. Varro Atacinus, another borderline case, is known to have written *saturae*, according to Horace *Satire* 1.10.46. On satire, see pp. 10-15 below.

¹⁸ Cicero names the “new poets” οἱ νεώτεροι in 50 BCE (*Letter to Atticus* 7.2.1), *poetae novi* in 46 (*Orator* 161), and *cantores Euphorionis* in 45 (*Tusculan Disputations* 3.45), assuming he is referring in each case to the same group. Whether he means also to refer to Catullus, who is commonly presumed dead by 54 BCE, is uncertain but not unlikely (cf. Lightfoot 1999, p. 57; if tastes change slowly for those not on the cutting edge of a particular artistic movement, there might be little difference between Catullus and the living poets like Cinna or a young Cornelius Gallus as far as Cicero is concerned, despite a shared interest in Hellenistic poetry). Cf. Courtney 1980, p. 122 on the elasticity of Latin words for time.

¹⁹ The *LSJ* s.v. νεώτερος mentions as examples the scholia on *Iliad* 16.574 and 24.257, used “of poets later than Homer.” Wiseman, although he cites the *LSJ*, thinks the definition is limited to post-Homeric epicists when used by the Alexandrian scholars (Wiseman 1974, p. 51).

²⁰ See *OLD* s.v. *Onchesmites* and *LSJ* s.v. Ὀγχησίμυτης. Obscurity is also Euphorion’s stock in trade, according to Cicero; in 44 BCE (*On Divination* 2.133) he refers to Euphorion as *ille vero nimis etiam obscurus Euphorion*, which implies that the *cantores Euphorionis* and the νεώτεροι are the same group of poets.

Cicero describes the *poetae novi* as avoiding ecthipsis of a final –s, a rule broken only once (and to make a point) by Catullus.²¹

The neoteric poets, as they are usually called in scholarly writing, are described in the *OCD* as that group of poets writing at or about the time of Catullus and espousing Callimachean ideals, including “a studied elegance in vocabulary, word order, metre, and narrative form.”²² There is some disagreement on the appropriateness of this definition; for example, Courtney suggests that the term “neoteric” be abandoned, dismissing Cicero’s *poetae novi* as “purely temporal” and his *cantores Euphorionis* as having to do solely with Helvius Cinna; for Courtney, only the term νεώτεροι is meaningful, referring to “epigones ..., contemporary poets ... not up to their predecessors” who “shared the Alexandrian partiality for spondaic lines ... and *doctrina*,” a group from which Cicero excludes himself despite his own attempts at updating the Latin hexameter.²³

Lyne allows for the more general use of the term but cogently argues that at the very least Cicero is referring to a particular group when he refers to νεώτεροι.²⁴ More recently, W.R. Johnson argues that there is no need to posit some sort of formal school, which seems reasonable; instead, he imagines, a tipping point was reached when enough poets and readers of poetry decided to put their efforts into something other than

²¹ This occurrence, at the last line of poem 116, has been identified specifically as mockery and imitation of Gellius (Schmidt 1897, p. lxvi), whom Catullus attacks in a number of other poems (74, 80, and 88-91), as well as as an allusion to Ennius (fr. 95 in Skutsch 1985; cf. Goold’s note at p. 181 of Cornish 1988 [1913], citing Timpanaro 1978, p. 177, n. 42). For a contrary but ultimately unconvincing viewpoint, see Trappes-Lomax 2007, pp. 6-8.

²² Nelis 1996, p. 679 (in the 3rd edition of the *OCD*, reprinted unchanged in the 4th edition). He identifies the neoterics as “Catullus and a few like-minded contemporaries, perhaps under the guidance of Parthenius.” Genres of interest to the neoterics include “polymetric experiments in lyric and iambic poetry, ... epigram and narrative elegy, ... and the epyllion.”

²³ Courtney 2003 [1993], p. 189; for Cicero, see pp. 149-152.

²⁴ Lyne 1978, pp. 167-169.

annalistic epic in the Ennian mode—enough that it annoyed Cicero (himself a major source of what remains of Ennius) sufficiently to disparage it.²⁵ Therefore, for the purposes of this project, I will include among the *poetae novi* even writers of annalistic epic (such as Furius Bibaculus with his *Annales Belli Gallici* and Varro Atacinus with his *Bellum Sequanicum*),²⁶ provided that their other works overlap with the Catullan corpus in terms of metrical variety and betray a similar Callimachean influence—a definition that is more or less aligned with that of the *OCD* and with A.L. Wheeler: Catullus and his contemporaries “prefer the small poem, whether in distichs or in lyric meter, the elegy, the epithalamium, and especially”—not exclusively—“the short epic or epyllion.”²⁷ Although Cicero does seem specifically to be parodying the epyllion, or miniature epic (though the term epyllion is not ancient),²⁸ I argue that it is overly limiting to confine the term νεώτεροι to the genre epic/epyllion, and to those who wrote epyllia, even if it happens to be accurate. I believe the terms *poetae novi*, νεώτεροι, and *cantores Euphorionis* all refer to the same group, and for the sake of convenience I consider the modern terms “neoterics” and “neoteric poets” as equivalent.

It is in this short poetry that invective appears. In Catullus, this includes the elegiac couplet, the hendecasyllable and other lyric meters (including the Greater

²⁵ Johnson 2007, pp. 176-177.

²⁶ Varro Atacinus in particular seems to have embraced the “neoteric movement” in his later work; see Hollis 2007, pp. 177-178. As for Furius Bibaculus, he wrote “extremely elegant hendecasyllables which would not disgrace Catullus” (Hollis 2007, p. 2). I suggest that Johnson (and perhaps Cicero) go too far in seeing in the neoteric movement a rejection of “the voice of Ennius and the voices derived from his” (Johnson 2007, p. 178); the remark about derivative works no doubt holds water, but Ennian echoes appear too often in Catullus to unequivocally constitute a rejection (see Zetzel 1983).

²⁷ Wheeler 1934, p. 80. These poets, following Courtney 2003 [1993] and Johnson 2007, include Catullus, C. Licinius Calvus, C. Helvius Cinna, Q. Cornificius, L. Ticius, M. Furius Bibaculus, and P. Terentius Varro Atacinus.

²⁸ Lyne 1978, pp. 169-171. For the epyllion, see Allen 1940.

Asclepiadean, poem 30; the Sapphic Strophe, poem 11; and Priapeans, poem 17), as well as iambic meters. Of the remaining fragments of other *poetae novi*, by Calvus we have invective in hendecasyllables (fr. 34 Hollis = 2 Courtney), choliambes (fr. 36 Hollis = 3 Courtney), and elegiac couplets (frr. 38-39 Hollis = 17-18 Courtney). By Furius Bibaculus we have an iambic trimeter fragment (83 Hollis = 3 Courtney) which may be invective, two complete hendecasyllable poems which certainly are (85-85 Hollis = 1-2 Courtney), and the hexameter line of an elegiac couplet which again is almost certainly invective (fr. 89 Hollis = 4 Courtney). Julius Caesar, his lackeys and his extended family (including Pompey and Octavian) were favorite targets, according to Suetonius, Tacitus, and the fragments themselves.²⁹

The Romans inherited a set of assumptions about genre and meter from the Greeks, but for Catullus and the other *poetae novi*, as Sheets argues, this was filtered through Hellenistic Greek influence.

One of the most salient characteristics of [this influence] was the breakdown of traditional correlations between style and genre. As the genres became more artificial, they all tended to become more alike in their eclecticism Nevertheless, formal differences did remain, and indeed proliferated, once genre itself became just another color among the available choices on the poet's stylistic pallet.³⁰

Sheets hits on an important point; genres may have become more malleable in the Hellenistic period and therefore among *poetae novi*, but this also means that in order to extend a genre in a new direction there had to be some acknowledgement of the core

²⁹ Suetonius *Divus Iulius* 49 (Calvus) & 73 (Calvus and Catullus); Tacitus *Annales* 4.34.5 (Catullus and Bibaculus). The surviving invective elegiac epigrams by Calvus attack Caesar and Pompey, respectively. Catullus attacks Pompey, Caesar and their prodigal underling Mamurra most famously in poem 29, but see also poems 52, 54, 57, 105, 114, and 115.

³⁰ Sheets 2007, p. 190.

associations of that genre. So in two senses, Catullus was not writing in a vacuum. For one, invective poetry in a variety of meters was almost as common as the epyllion among the *poetae novi* as a group;³¹ more than that, rather than creating new genres from whole cloth, Catullus *engages* with preexisting conceptions about genres—including *iambos*.

Iambos and Catullus' Models

Under Augustus and the later emperors, invective for the most part is folded into the genre of satire (*satura*), becoming much less personalized and free in its speech (*libertas*) than in Catullus.³² Lucilius (2nd C. BCE) therefore seems like a more natural model for Catullus than for imperial satire, “associat[ing] the form with the laceration of contemporary mores and of representative debased individuals,” since his *libertas* in speech would not be possible under a *princeps* or emperor.³³ However, more direct links between Lucilius and Catullus are circumstantial at best. While they both name names, and while Lucilius writes in a variety of meters before settling on hexameters, including iambic meters and elegiac couplets, the former are the iambo-trochaic meters of comedy, and the fragments that remain of the latter exhibit no invective. What little remains of pre-neoteric Latin epigram is also largely free of invective; there is an epigram by Papinius which plays on the word *casca* and very mildly mocks the relationship between

³¹ Furius Bibaculus may also have written an epyllion on Memnon; see Hollis 2007, pp. 125-126 for the evidence.

³² This is not to say that the satirists are without bite, but their aggression is often aimed at character types, sometimes given names and sometimes not, but likely composed out of a pastiche of individuals. These types are often held up as a cautionary mirror to the reader (as in Horace; see Freudenburg 2001, pp. 7-9). Social commentary, while not absent in Catullus, is greatly broadened in satire; in Catullus, it is overwhelmingly rooted in particularities.

³³ Leigh 2000, p. 25.

a young man and an old woman, but the majority of what survives is either erotic or confined to commemoration of the dead.³⁴ Catullus therefore almost certainly looks less to native satire or early Latin epigram for his poetic models than to Archaic Greek writers of the genre *iambos*.

This influence is at least in part direct, as is clear from verbal echoes of Archilochus and Hipponax in Catullus' poetry (for example, poem 40 recalls Archilochus 172W and poem 44 contains a verbal echo of Hipponax 34W).³⁵ The Archaic iambic corpus appears to be "a loosely linked network of poetic types" rather than a monolithic structure built primarily around invective.³⁶ Mapping the Archaic corpus directly onto the Catullan can go only so far;³⁷ this approach fails to adequately account for the influence of the indirect iambic tradition, filtered through Hellenistic literary culture.³⁸

The most wide-ranging Hellenistic theory of *iambos* (based on Aristotle's *Poetics* and disseminated by the Peripatetics, according to Rotstein),³⁹ takes as a given that *iambos* is centered around invective as far and away its most dominant feature. This is clearly not based on the actual Archaic iambic corpus, wherein only roughly a tenth of the remaining fragments of Archilochus' poetry and slightly over a fifth of Hipponax'

³⁴ Fr. 1 Courtney 2003 [1993], p. 109. Manilius writes a couplet in comic meters on the same topic (fr. 1 Courtney 2003 [1993], p. 110). Cf. Wheeler 1934, pp. 72-73, who unconvincingly associates invective elegy with the feud between Naevius and Metelli.

³⁵ See e.g. Thomson 1997 [1978], pp. 308-309, and Vine 2009, respectively.

³⁶ Bowie 2001a, p. 6.

³⁷ Heyworth 2001.

³⁸ See Wray 2001, pp. 168-169, for Alexandrian treatments of Archilochus.

³⁹ Rotstein 2010 *passim*, esp. her "Final Remarks," including a new suggested dictionary entry, on pp. 347-352. See especially her Table 5 on p. 342, which demonstrates the words associated with *iambos* and Archilochus as its generic prototype from the time of Archilochus through Diphilus in the 4th C. BCE. Cf. p. 346: "the association of *iambos* with invective and abuse at the expense of other features may be the result of a reception driven by the concerns and anxieties of classical Athens, which may be representative of their time."

seem to include invective content. A competing theory (Stoic and/or Epicurean), mentioned by the poet and Epicurean philosopher Philodemus of Gadara, mapped the range of *iambos* over the actual Archaic corpus.⁴⁰ In other words, this theory acknowledged the fuzzy boundaries of the genre, tying what constitutes a generically iambic poem to what the genre's practitioners actually wrote.⁴¹ This, however, was a minority theory, not the popular theory used in Peripatetic education; since the Stoic/Epicurean theory was more complex, it was less instantly recognizable.⁴² Catullus was certainly aware of and responded to the more widespread theory; the other is useful

⁴⁰ On Catullus and Philodemus as contemporaries aware of each other's work, see Schuster 1925 and Marcovich 1982 (but cf. the objections of Lafaye 1894 and Wheeler 1934; cf. Nappa 1998, p. 388, n. 6). Philodemus 23 may be a model for Catullus 13; Skinner 2003, pp. 216-217, n. 38, points out another possible connection between Philodemus' sarcastic praise of Antimachus "for specifying cities and places with such beautiful harmony and placing them in such excellent order" in *On Poems* 5 and Catullus 95, which "turns on a joke involving them."

⁴¹ So Pausimachus in Philodemus *On Poems* I:

‘It will make no difference’, says Pausimachus, ‘even if we match Archilochus ... against Homer, if we juxtapose only the praiseworthy diction ... For it is not because ... iambus [is] in some way a different (genre), that we shall match one poet against another ... since the end is the same for every genre. ...’

... poets of lampoon (ιαμβοποιοί) compose tragic (verses), and conversely tragic poets compose lampoons, and Sappho composes some (verses) in the manner of lampoon, and Archilochus (some) not in the manner of lampoon. Hence one must say that a composer of iambus or some other genre (exists) not by nature, but by convention (νόμῳ) ...

Philodemus, *On Poems* I, col. 77 & col. 117 Janko 2000, translation by Fantuzzi & Hunter 2004, pp. 458-459.

Asmis 1992 and Rotstein 2010 assign the second passage to Crates of Mallos.

⁴² Though it is clear that Callimachus is aware of it. Pausimachus and the other euphonists, who believed that “poetic value neutralize[d] moral value” (Porter 2012), assigned genre to convention rather than nature, and Fantuzzi & Hunter 2004, p. 459, explain this as an extension of Callimachus *Iambos* 13.30-33, σὺ πεντάμετρα συντίθει, σὺ δ’ ἡ[ρῶν]ιν, / σὺ δὲ τραγωδε[ῖν] ἐκ θεῶν ἐκληρώσω; / δοκέω μὲν οὐδεὶς (“You compose pentameters, and you the heroic, and for you to do tragedy is allotted from the gods”? I think nobody [said this]): “Callimachus seems ... merely to have wished to assert the right of a poet to write in more than one genre (*polyeideia*); Pausimachus ... appears to have taken a still more radical position by stressing the permeability of generic boundaries.” See also Kerkhecker 1999, pp. 261-262, and Acosta-Hughes 2002, pp. 82-89 *ad loc.*

only to the extent that Catullus' readers were aware of its existence and so prepared to notice references to it.

Hellenistic influence becomes manifest in Hellenistic editors' organization of poems and authors into canonical texts; particularly relevant to Catullus is the arrangement of the works of Archilochus in Alexandria by meter, as opposed to some alternative principle (such as "Archilochean sympotic poetry" as opposed to "Archilochean narrative poetry," for example), as has been posited from the style of Archilochus citations in Athenaeus.⁴³ Though the precise nature of the book of Archilochus' poems that Athenaeus had access to is uncertain,⁴⁴ an alternative arrangement might have mixed Archilochus' elegiac couplets in with his iambic invectives, effectively contaminating the former with the latter and opening up elegiac couplets to Archilochean invective. This could have resulted (for example) from an arrangement according to length: though much of Archilochus' poetry is fragmentary, his sympotic poetry (including both elegy and *iambi*)⁴⁵ appears to be significantly shorter than his narratives (mostly tetrameters).⁴⁶

The biographical tradition can also play a role in shaping perceptions of the practices of Archaic iambographers. For example, Critias concludes from Archilochus' poetic self-portrayal that he is the son of a slave (when he calls himself Ἐνιποῦς υἱὸς,

⁴³ See Rotstein 2010, pp. 29-31, esp. n. 22, citing the arguments of Finkelberg 2006, p. 239, that each of the Hellenistic kingdoms (such as Pergamum) could potentially have laid claim to an authoritative text of some given author and that organization need not have been the same in each. Athenaeus never refers to Archilochus' poems by genre, and out of seventeen quotations only refers to two by meter.

⁴⁴ See Bowie 2000 on this question.

⁴⁵ See Gentili 1988, pp. 34-35, for the suggestion that *iambi* were performed at symposia.

⁴⁶ See Bowie 2001a, 2001b, and West 2006 on Archilochean narratives.

“the son of Blame,” 44 *DK*);⁴⁷ though Catullus does not represent himself as a slave, Archilochus’ self-portrayal may have paved the way for Catullus to exhibit vulnerability in certain other respects, such as his supposed poverty (poems 10 and 13). Wray draws specifically on Critias’ criticism of Archilochus in his observation that the “emasculating shame” heaped upon Catullus’ enemies can redound upon Catullus himself (as at 28.9-10, where Catullus acknowledges that Memmius has irrumated him); Archilochus too “was not a favorable witness in his own behalf.”⁴⁸ In addition, the popularity of the tales that Archilochus drove the Lycambids, and Hipponax the sculptors Bupalus and Athenis, to suicide, doubtless plays a major role in the emphasis on their invective.

Finally, new works based to varying degrees on the Archaic iambicists were created by Hellenistic authors, such as Herodas’ *Mimiambos* and Callimachus’ *Iamboi*. The *Iamboi* in particular might have influenced some of Catullus’ choices about iambic invective content (such as literary criticism) and meter; Newman points out that the four lyric poems following *Iambos* 13 in the papyrus fragments were not originally considered part of a separate work, and that the first of these is in hendecasyllables.⁴⁹ The variability of content in Hellenistic collections of epigrams such as the *Garland* of Meleager might also have opened the door for Catullus to use elegiac couplets for invective, despite the scanty evidence for that type of poem.⁵⁰

Catullus plays with audience expectations, sometimes confirming the traditional association of *iambos* and invective, at other times dynamically and provocatively

⁴⁷ Rosen 2007, pp. 248-251; Rotstein 2010, pp. 300-317 (originally published as Rotstein 2007).

⁴⁸ Wray 2001, pp. 175-176.

⁴⁹ Newman 1990, p. 49; see Chapter Three (pp. 137-183 below).

⁵⁰ It becomes much more popular after Catullus; cf. Nisbet 2003.

straining against the ever-present theoretical backdrop that iambic meter should match invective message. This freedom to challenge the generic tradition is part of what lends Catullus' poetry so much of its creative energy, whether this freedom is derived from a minority Stoic or Epicurean theoretical opinion about *iambos*, from Hellenistic organization(s) of the Archaic iambic corpora, or from Callimachean interpretations of the iambic genre.

Catullus and the other *poetae novi* were certainly aware of the works of Callimachus, but, as Lightfoot asks, “*which* poems by Callimachus were the Romans familiar with?”⁵¹ The refocused interest of the *poetae novi* on Callimachus could have provided an impetus to look with a fresh aesthetic at underappreciated works like the *Iamboi* or its generic forebears.⁵² Callimachus refocuses *iambos* away from invective, reshaping the genre as it stood in the Hellenistic period rather than reasserting the wider range it may have originally held. As Kerkhecker puts it,

We shall still find an Iambic ‘I’, though rather more civilized than aggressive. We shall still find judgements, moral and aesthetic, though the communal (Archilochean?) agenda of the ἐταῖροι at the συμπόσιον give way to an individual’s (Hipponactean?) concern with manners. To this individual, poetry and philology matter, but so do friendship and love.⁵³

Callimachus' subversion of *iambos* may have had an influence on Catullan iambic poetry, but Catullus by no means subscribes to a Callimachean *iambos* with no place for invective, nor does he limit his invective to iambic meters.

⁵¹ Lightfoot 1999, p. 53.

⁵² Clausen 1964 and Puelma Piwonka 1949 suggest that Callimachus' *Iamboi* were already an influence on Lucilius' *Satires*, and Van Rooy 1965, pp. 34-37 sees their influence even earlier, on Ennius.

⁵³ Kerkhecker 1999, p. 2.

Plan of the Work

In Chapter One, I argue that Catullus' poems 4, 29, and 52 form a natural group based on their shared meter, iambic trimeters, and despite poem 4's seeming lack of invective content. The meter of poem 4 has been recognized by many as reflecting the swift journey of its subject, the *phaselus*, as it flits along the waves.⁵⁴ I begin from Morgan's observations about the meter's perceived speed, notices for which appear only once in pre-Catullan metrical theory.⁵⁵ Through a close reading of poem 4, I demonstrate that it contains a number of what I call invective markers, words or phrases used elsewhere in the Catullan corpus in the context of invective attacks.⁵⁶ Putting the two together, I argue that poem 4's swift, metapoetic *phaselus* avoids obstacles meant to be indicative of the most dominant characteristic of *iambos*, invective, by employing another hitherto underappreciated, if not completely unnoticed, characteristic of iambic meter: speed.

In Chapter Two, I separate Catullus' choliambic poems into two main, slightly overlapping groups, each with connections to the meter's creator Hipponax: choliambos which exhibit invective (poems 37, 39, 59, and 60), and those which diagnose some physical, psychological, and/or literary critical problem targeted by Catullus (8, 22, 31,

⁵⁴ This was first commented on by Pierio Valeriano in the 15th C. CE (see Gaisser 1993) and is periodically noticed by commentators.

⁵⁵ Morgan 2010b, pp. 130-139.

⁵⁶ Morgan 2010b, p. 150, n. 92, notes but leaves largely unexplored the possibility that poem 4 has "iambic qualities," which I call invective markers. Similarly, Johnson 2012, p. 48, n. 23 suggests that "it is hard not to read through [Catullus'] joy his complaint about being financially buggered [in Bithynia] by the propraetor Memmius." Both Johnson and Morgan have much the same feeling about poem 31 (in choliambos).

and 44).⁵⁷ The focus in most of Catullus' choliambic poems is on personal rather than public issues, not only marking the distinction between his choliambic and iambic trimeter invectives but reflecting the different approaches of the Archaic iambographers Hipponax and Archilochus.⁵⁸ I then provide a close reading of poem 37 to demonstrate how Catullus' composition works with the meter, most notably his use of the limping line end to emphasize invective. I follow this with close readings of the diagnostic poems that exhibit mild, literary-critical invective (22 and 44), and those without invective (8 and 31), showing how Catullus repurposes the same techniques when outright invective is absent.

In Chapter Three, I start from the premise that the hendecasyllable is a generically ambiguous meter, encompassing both the iambic and a number of other modes, particularly lyric. This enables Catullus to refer to hendecasyllables as *iambi* in hendecasyllables (poems 36, 40, 54, and fr. 3) without limiting their use to invective. A close reading of poems 12 and 42 reveals Catullus' exploitation of the hendecasyllable's flexibility while keeping the focus on attacking his targets. I follow this with close readings of the connections between poems 15, 16, 21, and 40. Here, Catullus explores his own vulnerability to invective attacks against his masculinity, particularly where the iambic and erotic intersect, thus forcing him to reassert control with sexualized and hypermasculine iambic attacks on his detractors.

⁵⁷ Poems 44 and 60 (though the latter may be an incomplete poem; cf. Heyworth 2001) touch on another Hipponactean interest: parody of higher-register genres such as epic.

⁵⁸ Brown 1997, p. 42 (on Archilochus, who responds to the breakdown of a public social contract) & p. 87 (on Hipponax, who "respond[s] to a purely personal affront").

In Chapter Four, I argue that the unbalanced structure of the elegiac couplet makes it an attractive delivery system for invective concerning what Catullus conceives of as mismatched relationships, despite the lack of a clear abusive model in Greek elegiac epigram.⁵⁹ The distich's traditional association with sepulchral and dedicatory inscriptions lends itself to closed declarative statements; in Catullus, these often contain a choice between two possibilities.⁶⁰ I argue that there is a tension between the inherently disparate parts of the elegiac couplet, the hexameter and pentameter lines, and Catullus' reliance on balanced rhetorical structures that couch even the most outrageous statements in reasonable, logical language.⁶¹ The vast majority of poems in the elegiac corpus address relationships that Catullus considers out of balance in some way: mismatches of register, as in poems 105 and 94; failures of friendship, as in 93; sexual imbalances such as incest or Lesbia's "adultery," as in the Gellius poems (such as 74 and 90); or class issues, when provincials try to appear sophisticated, as in poem 97. I provide close readings of the poems listed, and show that Catullus often uses the meter to subtly draw attention to these tensions.

⁵⁹ Invective very occasionally appears in Hellenistic epigram collections, but is typically in iambic meters rather than elegiac couplets (see Bruss 2010, pp. 129-132 on Aeschrion and Dioscorides' poems on the courtesan Philaenis; the former [AP 7.345] is choliambic, the latter [AP 7.450] elegiac and more circumspect). Morelli 2007 contends that "Catullus conceived of epigram as an open form" (p. 537), that he took this openness as an invitation to use the elegiac epigram for invective in the vein of popular Roman traditions such as Fescennine verses and political slogans (p. 538; cf. Fraenkel 1961), and that "Ross (1969: 115-37) overemphasizes Roman features of Catullan elegiacs" which may instead have their roots in Theognis (pp. 536-537, esp. n. 69).

⁶⁰ Poems in stichic meters rely more on repetition to make their point.

⁶¹ So Fain 2008, p. 135.

Chapter One. *Catullus 4: Outstripping Invective in Iambic Trimeters*

Introduction

Catullus writes three poems (4, 29, and 52) in iambic trimeters, one of the meters originally used by Archilochus, the Archaic Greek father of the genre *iambos*.¹ The iambic trimeter poems are a rarity in the polymetric group (poems 1-60), which is primarily made up of hendecasyllables and choliamb, and form a natural metrical group precisely because they are anomalous. Still, they fit together uneasily. Poems 29 and 52 are both contemporary political invective, matching the traditional conception of *iambos* as an abusive genre in iambic meters. Poem 4, by contrast, is an intricate description of a ship's journey from the Black Sea to the lake of its retirement from service. All this is not told by the ship itself, but is reported from the point of view of a host talking to his guests, or, epigraphically, to passers-by (*hospites*, l. 1).² There is no overt invective in poem 4, making it an outsider even in its already anomalous metrical grouping; furthermore, it is the only "pure" trimeter in the collection. I will argue that while Catullus privileges the speed of the iambic trimeter by disallowing substitutions and describing a swift voyage, he nevertheless keeps poem 4 connected to his other trimeters and to the iambic invective tradition by having the ship bypass obstacles representing invective.

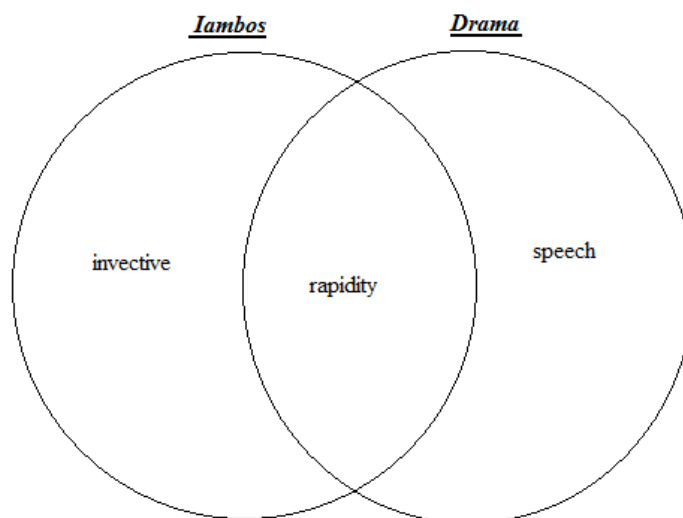
¹ Choliamb is modified iambic trimeter, technically, but I treat them separately in Chapter Two (pp. 63-136 below).

² The unnamed speaker "talks as though he has no personal knowledge of the facts, but insists he is reporting the yacht's own statements" (Quinn 1973 [1970], p. 100).

Poem 4 and Iambos

In order to place poem 4 in its proper context both in the Catullan corpus and in the history of *iambos*, it is crucial to briefly discuss the iambic trimeter's major historical uses. The meter mainly appeared in the genre *iambos* and in ancient drama; from these, it accrued three major associations: invective, speed, and the spoken word.

Figure 1



Each of these associations has its theoretical beginnings in Aristotle (see pp. 30-39 below).³ In casting the entirety of the poem as reported speech Catullus may be flaunting his knowledge of the multiple Aristotelian associations of the meter. Nevertheless, the fact that poem 4 is not part of a drama yet is in iambic trimeters suggests that it most closely belongs to the genre *iambos*. The corpus of the Archaic poets of *iambos* shows

³ Comedy also becomes associated with παρρησία (roughly equivalent to the Latin *libertas*), *freedom* of speech (rather than *pattern* of speech), within certain limits (e.g. no “antidemocratic” speech; see Henderson 1998, p. 271); this obviously also overlaps with the invective of *iambos*. Horace at the beginning of Satire 1.4 links Lucilius with Old Comedy and *libertas* (cf. Sommerstein 2011), but I stress that satire and *iambos* are different genres, and that meter is only one of the things they do not share; see pp. 10-15 in the *Introduction*.

considerable diversity, well beyond the boiled-down Aristotelian conception (*iambos* = invective).⁴ Nevertheless, even over a century before Catullus, *iambos* and invective had become inseparable to the point where attempts to split them required almost a *recusatio*, such as in the first few lines of Callimachus' *Iambos* 1. Here the author has the shade of the iambicist Hipponax deny that he intends to engage in the invective for which he is known:

... ἦκω
...
φέρων ἱαμβον οὐ μάχην αἰείδοντα
τὴν Βουπάλειον

I have come ... bearing an *iambos* which does not sing of the Bupalean battle.

Callimachus *Iambos* 1.1 & 3-4⁵

Although it would be extremely unusual for Catullus to completely avoid invective in an iambic poem without addressing its lack, no metrical *recusatio* is forthcoming.⁶

Below, I perform a close reading on poem 4 with two different aims. First, I show that the poem's structure and diction cause the speed of the iambic trimeter and of the ship to reflect and reinforce one another. I bolster this reading with a survey of theory relating *iambos* and iambic meters to speed, in no small part based on Morgan's observations,⁷ but I differ from Morgan in stressing that theories that link *iambos* and iambic meters to speed are almost entirely post-Catullan. I begin with what ancient theory on the issue is known to have been available to Catullus, and argue from a

⁴ Rotstein 2010, *passim*.

⁵ Text from Kerkhecker 1999, p. 18; translation from Acosta-Hughes 2002, p. 23. The sculptors Bupalus and Athenis were Hipponax's primary targets, as Lycambes was Archilochus'.

⁶ Catullus is not averse to *recusationes* generally, as is attested by poems 65, 68a, and 116; cf. Skinner 2003, pp. 3-5, with further references.

⁷ Morgan 2010b, pp. 130-148.

possible non-iambic model for poem 4—Callimachus’ *Epigram* 14—that the extent of Catullus’ innovation and influence on iambic theory and speed has been overlooked.⁸ I then return to close reading, fleshing out Morgan’s suggestion that poem 4 may contain “iambic qualities.”⁹ A number of invective markers do in fact appear in the poem, typically describing obstacles to be avoided by the ship. I argue that the *phaselus* is successful in avoiding these obstacles precisely because of its speed, with one quality of *iambos*, rapidity, enabling the ship to avoid becoming the subject of another: invective.

The Swiftest of Ships: Poem 4 and Iambic Rapidity

<i>Phaselus ille, quem videtis, hospites,</i>	
<i>ait fuisse navium celerrimus,</i>	
<i>neque ullius natantis impetum trabis</i>	
<i>nequisse praeterire, sive palmulis</i>	
<i>opus foret volare sive linteo.</i>	5
<i>et hoc negat minacis Hadriatici</i>	
<i>negare litus insulasve Cycladas</i>	
<i>Rhodumque nobilem horridamque Thracia</i>	
<i>Propontida trucemve Ponticum sinum,</i>	
<i>ubi iste post phaselus antea fuit</i>	10
<i>comata silva; nam Cytorio in iugo</i>	
<i>loquente saepe sibilum edidit coma.</i>	
<i>Amastri Pontica et Cytore buxifer,</i>	
<i>tibi haec fuisse et esse cognitissima</i>	
<i>ait phaselus: ultima ex origine</i>	15
<i>tuo stetisse dicit in cacumine,</i>	
<i>tuo imbuisse palmulas in aequore,</i>	
<i>et inde tot per impotentia freta</i>	
<i>erum tulisse, laeva sive dextra</i>	
<i>vocaret aura, sive utrumque Iuppiter</i>	20
<i>simul secundus incidisset in pedem;</i>	
<i>neque ulla vota litoralibus deis</i>	

⁸ Cf. Courtney 1997 on this epigram as a model for poem 4, and Fredrick 1999 for parallels between the themes of each poem (with Callimachus’ focused on visual play, Catullus’ on aural).

⁹ Morgan 2010b, p. 150, n. 92.

*sibi esse facta, cum veniret a mari
 novissime hunc ad usque limpidum lacum.
 sed haec prius fuere: nunc recondita 25
 senet quiete seque dedicat tibi,
 gemelle Castor et gemelle Castoris.*

That *phaselus* you see, my friends,
 says that it was once the fleetest of ships,
 and that there was never any attack of a floating beam
 whom it was unable to pass, whether it would fly 5
 with oar-blades or with canvas.
 And this (it says) the shore of the blustering Adriatic
 does not deny, nor the Cycladic isles
 and famous Rhodes and the Propontis bristling
 from a Thracian wind, nor the savage gulf of Pontus,
 where *that*, afterwards a *phaselus*, before was 10
 a leafy forest: for on the height of Cytorus
 it often rustled with talking leaves.
 Pontic Amastris and Cytorus green with box,
 the *phaselus* says these things have been and are
 well-known to you; it says that from its earliest 15
 birthtime it stood on your summit,
 in your waters first dipped its oar-blades,
 and thence over so many riotous seas
 brought its master, whether the breeze from left
 or right invited, or favorable Jupiter 20
 fell upon both sheets at once;
 and that no vows to the gods of the shore
 had been made for it when it was sailing
 at last from the sea even to this limpid lake.
 But these things are past and gone; now it rests 25
 in old age and retired leisure, and dedicates itself to you,
 twin Castor and twin of Castor.

Catullus 4¹⁰

Catullus' poem 4 cleverly conceals the invective normally associated with iambic meters in non-dramatic poetry. A surface reading of the poem reveals no invective whatsoever; a close reading, however, reveals a number of what in other contexts are

¹⁰ Text of Catullus is from Thomson 1997 [1978] except where indicated otherwise. Translations are adapted from Cornish 1988 [1913] except when indicated otherwise.

clear invective markers. Catullus prioritizes the speed of the pure iambic trimeter to reflect the speed of the *phaselus* (a type of Greek skiff), enabling it to playfully escape the generic connection with invective. Though there is some evidence that ancient theorists before Catullus considered iambic meters to be inherently swift, only after Catullus is speed explicitly considered a major characteristic of *iambos*. Additionally, in personal poetry Catullus is unprecedented in making a fast object the primary focus of an iambic poem and in driving the usual connotation of *iambos* as invective beneath the surface.

Particular meters tend to call up particular generic associations, but the rhythm always lies beneath these; the metrical substructure of poem 4 is a rapid rhythm that confirms the speed of the *phaselus*. There are a number of words in the beginning of the poem having to do with speed or motion, serving to wed meter and content early on. The association of the pure iambic trimeter with rapidity seems logical (an iamb takes less time to say than a spondee) and has a theoretical basis, yet before Catullus, no one had used the meter specifically to describe a fast object. The seeming naturalness of the combination in poem 4 goes some way towards mollifying the reader for its apparent—but not actual—lack of invective content. Morgan identifies poem 4 as “a conspicuous exception” to the marked invective content found in every other extant pure iambic poem in Latin (all of which are post-Catullan).¹¹ He lists *Catalepton* 6, 10 (the invective

¹¹ Morgan 2010b, pp. 140-141. Catullus’ poem 29 is not quite pure trimeters, as it allows one certain substitution of a spondee for an iamb at line 3, and what is usually printed as another at the textual crux at line 20.

parody of Catullus' poem 4), and 12, and two *Priapea* (Bücheler 83 and 85).¹² All of these poems focus on invective content, making poem 4 an outlier in a still larger group (as it is among Catullus' other iambic trimeter poems, 29 and 52). The 2nd C. CE poet and grammarian Terentianus Maurus quotes Catullus 4.1 several times in his discussion of *iambus* (ll. 2181ff.), and tellingly connects the form of the iambic foot not only to swiftness but to aggressive force, positing (erroneously) that the trimeter's original form was pure.¹³ Theoretically, then, abuse in pure iambic trimeters should be that much more potent, and the mismatch in poem 4 all the more serious. Instead, as Morgan argues, Catullus chooses the pure iambic trimeter for two reasons: because it is Hellenizing¹⁴ and because it is fast. But the traditional iambic association with invective cannot be so easily swept aside. Catullus recasts a common theme of Hellenistic epigram, the dedicatory poem, into a unique meter. This meter, in context with the other iambic trimeter poems in the Catullan corpus, engenders an expectation of the abusive content so inextricably linked with *iambos*—an expectation which is partially and subversively addressed by the invective markers hidden throughout the poem (see pp. 39-61 below). Catullus then revives the iambic *meter's* association with movement, an observation

¹² Bücheler 1904 [1862]. Morgan also adds Horace's *Epode* 16, which alternates dactylic hexameters with pure iambic trimeters (Morgan 2010b, p. 141, and in greater detail at pp. 176-180).

¹³ See the discussion in Morgan 2010b, pp. 143-144.

¹⁴ Morgan 2010b, pp. 135-139. The idea is that Catullus' choice of pure iambics was as much a reaction against the practice of Roman drama, which allowed too many substitutions and resolutions (cf. Cicero *Orator* 184), as an attempt to return to an imagined ideal of Greek practice; imagined, because there are no entirely pure iambic trimeter poems in Greek (pp. 130-132). There are of course many Hellenizing aspects of poem 4, such as Grecisms in word choice (*phaselus*, l. 1 = φάσηλος) and grammatical constructions (*ait fuisse ... celerrimus*, l. 2); cf. Fordyce 1961, pp. 99ff., Wiseman 1979, p. 168, and Thomson 1997 [1978], pp. 214f. The same cannot be said however for poem 29, which is also (almost wholly) in pure iambs, and so I think Catullus most likely chooses the meter for effect and for its generic connotations, not in an attempt to make it more Greek.

made by Aristotle that had either dropped out of or never made it into the Peripatetic educational generic paradigm of *iambos*.¹⁵

In poem 4, the *phaselus* is described (or rather, is said to describe itself) as *navium celerrimus* (“the fastest of ships,” l. 2); is able *ullius natantis impetum trabis ... praeterire* (“to go by the assault of any floating beam,” ll. 3-4) and *volare* (“to fly,” l. 5). In only four lines (ll. 6-9), the *phaselus* makes a spatial voyage all the way from the Pontic gulf to the Adriatic shore (described in reverse order). This is immediately followed by a voyage back through time, with the change from *comata silva* (“long-haired woods,” l. 11) to *phaselus* described in detail (ll. 10-17). This transformation is actually accomplished in less than the space of two lines:

*ubi iste post phaselus antea fuit
comata silva ...*

Catullus 4.10-11

The words *post* and *antea* (“after” and “before,” both adverbs, but with *post* acting adjectivally with *phaselus*)¹⁶ signal the sudden shift in time: “that, afterwards a *phaselus*, before was / long-haired woods.” After some elaboration on this quick change, from lines 11-17, the next few lines describe the *phaselus*’ freedom of movement, which is maintained regardless of the winds (*laeva sive dextera / vocaret aura, sive utrumque Iuppiter / simul secundus incidisset in pedem*, “whether a left- or right-hand breeze was calling, or whether favorable Jupiter [i.e., wind] had fallen on each foot at once,” ll. 19-

¹⁵ See Rotstein 2010, pp. 143-147. The educational paradigm to which she refers is based on Aristotle, but simplifies the genre so that *iambos* is boiled down to abusive content in iambic meters (despite the number of poems by the Archaic iambicists that this excludes; cf. Bowie 2001a).

¹⁶ This construction is a Grecism; cf. Quinn 1973 [1970], *ad loc.*

21). Finally, from the Adriatic (presumably the *mari* of l. 23) to the clear lake (*limpidum lacum*, l. 24), the place where the craft retires, takes the space of one line:

*sibi esse facta, cum veniret a mari
novissime hunc ad usque limpidum lacum
Catullus 4.23-24*

The lake is juxtaposed with the sea, both in the same part of succeeding lines. That they are each at the end of the line fits with the suggestion that the Adriatic is the last sea in the voyage (it is worth noting that *Hadriatici* is also at the end of a line, l. 6), and the *lacum* the ultimate destination.¹⁷

In addition to words chosen to indicate speed, the *phaselus* in many ways calls to mind the Argo, “whose very name means ‘swift’,” as Hornsby observes.¹⁸ Ax confirms the link, pointing out that Castor and Pollux were Argonauts and that many of the places mentioned in poem 4 are also places passed by in Apollonius’ epic (e.g., Cytorus, at Catullus 4.11 and at *Argonautica* 2.942).¹⁹ The iambic meter and the Argo were both associated not only with speed (ἄργός = swift, and has an etymological gloss in *cita ... puppi*, Catullus 64.6), but also with speech: in poem 4, the *phaselus* is described as speaking, and the Argo carried a speaking beam from the Dodonian grove (*Argonautica* 1.526-527).

Catullus chooses pure iambic trimeters in order to make the meter mirror the speed of the ship as closely as possible, but by doing so he denies himself a major metrical tool: the ability to substitute long syllables for short as a way to call attention to

¹⁷ Some commentators read *novissimo* for *novissime*, but this reading is not necessary to my treatment of *mari*. I think the *lacus* is likely the same as that at Sirmio (cf. poem 31, which I treat in Chapter Two, pp. 122-135 below).

¹⁸ Hornsby 1963, p. 263.

¹⁹ Ax 1993, p. 84.

Another example is the use of *palmulis* and *palmulas* in lines 4 and 17, respectively. This avoids the spondee *palmis*, which means the same thing; Catullus uses the word at 64.7 (*caerula verrentes abiegnis aequora palmis*). The word is also not attested in the diminutive prior to Catullus' usage, which suggests a deliberate choice to avoid the spondee. The diminutive form has an added benefit of contributing to a description of the *phaselus* as small, implying swiftness and maneuverability.

Certain other words seem to be chosen at least in part in order to avoid spondees, although as with *Castoris* and *pamulis/-as*, there may be other factors which contribute to the choice. For example, the word *linteo* at the end of line 5 avoids the spondee of *velo*,²² and Kroll identifies *senet* at the beginning of line 26 as a way of avoiding *senescit*, which if not followed by a word beginning with a vowel would end with a spondee.²³ Ellis points to *cognitissima* at the end of line 14 as a *hapax legomenon* in the superlative;²⁴ the word is one of four five-syllable iambic words in poem 4 which could not appear in a hexameter line (with *Hadriatici*, l. 6; *impotentia*, l. 18; and *litoralibus*, l. 22).

All of this suggests that Catullus not only was particular about choosing words that described the *phaselus* as fast, but in avoiding words that would disrupt that impression by breaking the metrical flow with a spondee. Meter is an integral part of communicating that the *phaselus* is swift, and matter and meter reinforce one another. As I mentioned before, however, the iambic trimeter's connection to speed is not limited to

²² I put forth another possible reason for Catullus' choice of *linteo* below (pp. 39-61).

²³ Kroll 1968 [1923], *ad loc.* Both Kroll and Thomson 1997 [1978] identify *senet* as solemn, which fits well with the formality of the *phaselus*' dedication.

²⁴ Ellis 1889 [1876] *ad loc.* The entire line is reused at *Catalepton* 10.13, and the comparative form appears in Ovid at *Met.* 14.15 and at *Trist.* 4.6.28.

observations on the meter's use in this poem, but has a possible theoretical basis in Aristotle.

Iambics, Iambos and Speed

Catullus 4 is the first poem to use the iambic trimeter for speed and, in pursuit of this aim, is the first iambic trimeter poem to disallow any substitutions. Before Catullus, there is only one brief (but influential) instance where the iambic trimeter is tied to motion, in Aristotle's *Poetics*:

τὸ γὰρ ἥρωικὸν στασιμώτατον καὶ ὀγκωδέστατον τῶν μέτρων ἐστὶν ..., τὸ δὲ ἱαμβεῖον καὶ τετράμετρον κινητικὰ καὶ τὸ μὲν ὀρχηστικὸν τὸ δὲ πρακτικόν.

[S]ince the hexameter is the most stately and dignified of metres ..., while the iambic trimeter and trochaic tetrameter are rhythms for movement, the latter suiting dancing, the former action.

Aristotle *Poetics* 1459b.²⁵

Earlier in the same work, Aristotle described how iambic trimeters became the meter of dramatic dialogue:

ἐκ μικρῶν μύθων καὶ λέξεως γελοίας διὰ τὸ ἐκ σατυρικοῦ μεταβαλεῖν ὁψὲ ἀπεσεμνύνθη, τό τε μέτρον ἐκ τετραμέτρου ἱαμβεῖον ἐγένετο. ... λέξεως δὲ γενομένης αὐτὴ ἡ φύσις τὸ οἰκεῖον μέτρον εὔρε· μάλιστα γὰρ λεκτικὸν τῶν μέτρων τὸ ἱαμβεῖον ἐστίν· σημεῖον δὲ τούτου, πλεῖστα γὰρ ἱαμβεῖα λέγομεν ἐν τῇ διαλέκτῳ τῇ πρὸς ἀλλήλους.

[A]fter a period of slight plots and laughable diction, owing to development from a satyric ethos, it was at a late stage that tragedy acquired dignity, and its metre became the iambic trimeter instead of the trochaic tetrameter. ... when spoken dialogue was introduced, tragedy's own nature discovered the appropriate metre. For the iambic trimeter, more than any other metre, has the rhythm of speech: an

²⁵ Text and translation of the *Poetics* from Halliwell 1999 [1995] unless otherwise indicated. See Morgan 2010b, p. 171.

indication of this is that we speak many trimeters in conversation with one another.

Aristotle *Poetics* 1449a

Cicero later echoes this theory, though what is true for Greek is not necessarily so for Latin, which has fewer short syllables.²⁶

This argument for the conversational quality of the iambic trimeter also appears in the *Rhetoric*, where Aristotle describes the iambic meter as “the language of the many,” and again associates the trochaic with dancing:

ὁ δ' ἱαμβος αὐτὴ ἐστὶν ἡ λέξις ἡ τῶν πολλῶν. διὸ μάλιστα πάντων τῶν μέτρων ἱαμβεῖα φθέγγονται λέγοντες. ... ὁ δὲ τροχαῖος κορδακικώτερος· δηλοῖ δὲ τὰ τετράμετρα· ἔστι γὰρ τροχερὸς ῥυθμὸς τὰ τετράμετρα

[T]he iambic by itself is the [*sc.* spoken] language of the many; thus all people most often speak in iambs. ... The trochaic meter is rather too much of a comic dance, as is clear from trochaic tetrameters; for they are a tripping rhythm.

Aristotle *Rhetoric* 1408b-1409a²⁷

All of these mentions specifically refer to the rhythm of the iambic trimeter, its incompatibility with epic (too undignified), its aptness for dramatic dialogue, and finally its unsuitability for speeches (too conversational).²⁸ They do *not* refer to the genre of personal poetry called *iambos*, whose dominant feature is invective.²⁹

²⁶ Cicero *Orator* 191.

²⁷ Text from Freese 1926, pp. 382-384; translation from Kennedy 2007, pp. 212-213.

²⁸ “[I]t is noteworthy that, unlike the *trochaeos*, which is explained by an etymological argument (‘for it is a running rhythm’ implies a connection between τροχαῖος and τροχερός), this is not the case with the *iambos*. It appears as a rather neutral rhythm, without etymological explanations” (Rotstein 2010, p. 63; see pp. 61-111 on terms relating to the genre *iambos* and to the iambic trimeter in Aristotle).

²⁹ Rotstein 2010 refers to this group as the “narrow *iambos*,” as distinct from the “received *iambos*,” which is much more inclusive of works in the corpus of canonical iambic poets (and in some cases certain works outside the corpus, such as the invective poetry of Sappho); see esp. pp. 143-147. It is telling that in the case of Sappho, it may well be the presence of invective in her lyrics that causes the *Suda* to suggest that she wrote *iamboi* (Σ 107; cf. Rotstein pp. 35-38). For more on “iambic Sappho” see Aloni 1997, pp. lxi-lxxv, and Aloni 2001, pp. 29-31; cf. Martin 1989, pp. 65-77.

The 3rd C. BCE Alexandrian scholar-poet Callimachus, whom Catullus translates in poem 66 and mentions in poems 65 and 116,³⁰ provides an interesting possible precursor, the nautilus epigram (*Epigram 14*):

κόγχος ἐγώ, Ζεφυρίτι, παλαιότερον, ἀλλὰ σὺ νῦν με,
 Κύπρι, Σεληναίης ἄνθεμα πρῶτον ἔχεις,
 ναυτίλος ὃς πελάγεσσιν ἐπέπλεον, εἰ μὲν αἴται,
 τεῖνας οἰκείων λαῖφος ἀπὸ προτόνων,
 εἰ δὲ Γαληναίη, λιπαρὴ θεός, οὗλος ἐρέσσων 5
 ποσσίν—ἴδ' ὥς τῶργῳ τοῦνομα συμφέρεται—
 ἔστ' ἔπεσον παρὰ θῖνας Ἰουλίδος, ὄφρα γένωμαι
 σοὶ τὸ περίσκεπτον παίγνιον, Ἀρσινόη,
 μηδὲ μοι ἐν θαλάμῃσιν ἔθ' ὥς πάρος—εἰμὶ γὰρ ἄπλους—
 τίκτεται νοτερῆς ὤεον ἀλκυόνος. 10
 Κλεινίου ἀλλὰ θυγατρὶ δίδου χάριν· οἶδε γὰρ ἐσθλὰ
 ῥέζειν, καὶ Σμύρνης ἐστὶν ἀπ' Αἰολίδος.

A conch long ago, but now, Kypris of Zephyrion,
 I am your gift, Selenaië's first offering—
 a nautilus that plied the seas, holding the wind
 in my own sails, by my own halyards
 when it blew, churning with my feet for oars 5
 when Galenaië stilled the shimmering waves (I'm
 named,
 you see, for what I did) until, pitched up on the beach
 at Ioulis, I became, Arsinoë, your admired toy,
 and the time (my sailing days are over now)
 when the brooding halcyon stowed her egg in my
 chambers 10
 came to an end. But favour the daughter of Kleinias, for she
 is well-behaved and hails from Aiolian Smyrna.
 Callimachus *Epigram 14*³¹

Both Catullus' *phaselus* poem and Callimachus' nautilus poem are, at least in part, dedicatory epigrams describing from a present vantage point the past sailing life of each

³⁰ Thomson 1997 [1978], pp. 213-214, suggests that Catullus' poem 4 is actually a translation of a lost Callimachus poem. Note that poem 116, which mentions Callimachus, also alludes to the two characteristics of Catullan *iambi*, invective (*tela*) and speed (*evitabimus*), in the same line: *contra nos tela ista tua evitabimus acta* ("we will evade those weapons of yours hurled against us," l. 7).

³¹ Text from Hopkinson 1988, pp. 76-77; translation by Nisetich 2001, p. 176.

object.³² Callimachus writes in elegiac couplets, by far the most popular meter for epigrams. The poem's only spondaic resolution in its hexameter lines is the proper name in line 5, *Gǎ-|lēnaī-|ē*, with three long syllables in a row. This achieves an effect similar to Catullus' pure iambic trimeters, giving an impression of rapidity. Catullus, then, whether or not he has this particular poem in mind, is taking the next logical step, jettisoning the elegiac couplet in favor of a more regular and even swifter meter.³³ By writing in pure iambic trimeters, he avoids the clarity of line-end (and couplet-end) in the elegiac distich, particularly the strong midline caesura in the pentameter.

From the Aristotelian passages, it may seem a simple and logical leap to the idea that *iamboi* are fast because they are in iambic trimeters. This leap, however, is only made after Catullus. Catullus does not explicitly associate the genre *iambos* with speed in poem 4, as he does with abuse in other poems (*desissemque truces vibrare iambos*, 36.5; *agit praecipitem in meos iambos*, 40.2; *irascere iterum meis iambis*, 54.6; *at non effugies meos iambos*, fr. 3).³⁴ Still, with the invective subsumed in poem 4, what remains above the surface is the rapidity of the poem's subject, the *phaselus*. I strongly suspect that poem 4 is what causes the explicit theoretical linkage of *iambos* and speed, expanding the previously limited conception of the genre. At the very least, Catullus' poem 4 is the first poem in iambic trimeters specifically about a fast-moving object.

³² See especially Mette 1962, who notes a strange mix of subgenres of epigram in the Catullus poem, not only dedicatory but sepulchral. Cf. Hezel 1932, pp. 9-14; Kroll 1968 [1923], p. 7; Syndikus 1984, pp. 89-90; and Thomson 1997 [1978], pp. 213-214.

³³ He certainly has epigrams as a class in mind; cf. Fuhrer 1994.

³⁴ Catullus' model Callimachus engages in the same sort of acknowledgement in the introductory poem of his *Iamboi*. Callimachus' 'Hipponax' is compelled to acknowledge the usual linkage between *iambos* and abuse even as he (somewhat unbelievably) denies his participation in it. Catullus *does* connect speed and meter in *galliambs* (*citato cupide pede tetigit*, 63.2; *citus adit ... properante pede chorus*, 63.30). For this type of play see Barchiesi 1994.

After Catullus, the connection between movement and *iambos* as a genre becomes well-established in both poetry and theory. Julius Caesar's *Iter*, if the attribution of the sole surviving line (either a partial trimeter or choliamb) is correct, is an early example.³⁵ The *terminus post quem* of the poem, which described Caesar's journey from Rome to Spain in 46 BCE, is necessarily later than the date of Catullus' poem 4, given that Catullus is commonly believed to be dead by 54 BCE.³⁶ I suspect that poem 4 is a likely model for all later travel poetry in iambic trimeters.³⁷

The next generation of poets combines speed with invective (itself a long-established feature) in its conception of *iambos* and the iambic trimeter. Two decades after the *Iter*, and referring to his own *Epodes*, the poet Horace explicitly connects *iambos* with both speed and abuse in his first book of *Odes*:³⁸

... me quoque pectoris
temptavit in dulci iuventa
fervor et in celeris iambos
misit furentem

I too was assailed by the fire of passion in my breast in the sweet days of youth and driven raging to swift iambics.

Horace *Odes* 1.16.22-25³⁹

Horace here is clearly connecting iambic meters to the genre *iambos* via that genre's penchant for invective (*fervor*, *furentem*), but also to speed (*celeris*). In his later work, he

³⁵ *Corpusque suavi telino unguimus*, fr. 2 in Courtney 2003 [1993], p. 187. See Morgan 2000, pp. 104-105.

³⁶ Suetonius *Divus Iulius* 56.5.

³⁷ Poems 31 and 46 are to some extent likely models for later travel poetry in choliamb and hendecasyllables, respectively, but poem 4 stands out because of its concentration on speed.

³⁸ It is worth noting that Horace is everywhere careful to avoid the impression of indebtedness to Catullus, concerned as he is with being the first to bring Archilochus to Latium (*Parios ego primus iambos / ostendi Latio, numeros animosque secutus / Archilochi, non res et agentia verba Lycamben* [Epistles 1.19.23-25]). The text of Horace's poetry is from Wickham & Garrod 1912 [1901] unless otherwise noted.

³⁹ Translation from West 1997, p. 40.

acknowledges the fact that iambic meters were used for all sorts of genres; in the *Ars Poetica* (tentatively dated to 10 BCE),⁴⁰ he describes the difference in character between more iambic and more spondaic trimeters (that is, those with fewer and more substitutions, respectively):

*syllaba longa brevi subiecta vocatur iambus,
pes citus; unde etiam trimetris accrescere iussit
nomen iambeis, cum senos redderet ictus
primus ad extremum similis sibi † non ita pridem †.
tardior ut paulo graviorque veniret ad aures,
spondeos stabilis in iura paterna recepit
commodus et patiens, non ut de sede secunda
cederet aut quarta socialiter. Hic et in Acci
nobilibus trimetris apparet rarus, et Enni
in scaenam missos cum magno pondere versus
aut operae celeris nimio curaue carentis
aut ignoratae **premit** artis **crimine turpi**.*

A long syllable added to a short one is what we call the *iambus*, a swift foot; building on this, the *iambus* wanted that the trimetra should bear the name of ‘iambic,’ giving them a sequence of six beats, equal and pure from beginning to end ... In order to be perceived as a bit slower and steadier, the *iambus* accepted the weighty spondae into its family property, tolerant and accommodating, except that it would not so easily be dislodged from its quarters in the second and fourth *sedes*. So the *iambus* is featured only rarely in Accius’ lofty trimetra: and it **pursues** Ennius’ lines, verses thrown into the stage with their heavy load, **with a shameful accusation** that they are too hasty and careless, or that poetic art has been neglected.

Horace *Ars Poetica* 251-262⁴¹

Horace argues not only that iambic trimeters are fast, but that a pure iambic trimeter is faster than a spondaic one.⁴² He goes on to reveal that he is speaking specifically of the drama of Accius, who avoids pure trimeters, and Ennius, who uses them too much.

⁴⁰ The other possibility is circa 20 BCE. For a discussion of the evidence, see Rudd 1989, pp. 19-21.

⁴¹ Text and translation of the *Ars Poetica* is adapted from Barchiesi 2001, p. 145f; cf. Morgan 2010b, pp. 136 & 144ff.

⁴² Rudd 1989, p. 192: “An iambic trimeter ... had two feet to a metron, and so its feet were evidently working faster than the feet in a hexameter, which had only one foot per metron.”

Although Horace is discussing the iambic trimeter in drama, Barchiesi argues that here Horace reveals (with *premit ... crimine turpi*) the primary function of *iambos*, abuse, despite its “show[ing] itself to be adaptable and tolerant, and ... act[ing] with sociable affability (*commodus, patiens*, even if not always *socialiter*).”⁴³ The *iambus* (l. 251) is still the subject of *premit*, despite the extended discussion: “the *iambus* pursues(!) the verses ... with a shameful accusation.”⁴⁴ After associating both speed and invective with iambic poetry in *Ode* 1.16, Horace is subtler in the *Ars Poetica*, acknowledging the trimeter’s use in drama (and arguing for its connection with speed more technically than Aristotle), but he cannot resist hinting at the abusive nature of *iambos*.

Ovid similarly associates the meter with both speed and abuse:

*liber in adversos hostes stringatur iambus,
seu celer, extremum seu trahat ille pedem.*

Let the free iambus be drawn against the opposing foe, whether it rapidly advance, or drag its final foot.

Ovid *Remedia Amoris* 377-378.⁴⁵

He contrasts the slowness of the choliamb, the “limping” meter, with the *celer iambus*, the “swift iambus.” In context this is clearly the iambic trimeter, whether pure or allowing substitutions.

⁴³ Barchiesi 2001, p. 146. For further discussion of Barchiesi’s argument see Morgan 2010b, pp. 146-148.

⁴⁴ My translation.

⁴⁵ Text from Kenney 1995 [1961], translation from Mozley 1979 [1929], p. 203. The word *liber*, referring both to trimeters and choliamb, refers to frank speech (*libertas*, roughly equivalent to the Greek *παρρησία*), according to Morgan 2007, p. 404. For the Roman concept, cf. Rudd 1957, pp. 325ff., and Ruffell 2003; for the Greek, cf. Henderson 1998. For the image of *libertas* as a drawn sword (activated by the verb *stringatur*), cf. Horace *Satire* 2.1.40-41, Juvenal *Satire* 1.165, and Tacitus *Annales* 4.36.3.

Writers continue to link iambic meters with both abuse and motion from the end of the 1st C. CE to the Byzantine era. In his *Institutio Oratoria*, from the end of the 1st C. CE, the rhetorician Quintilian says that for orators,

argumenta acria et citata pedibus quoque ad hanc naturam accomodatis utentur, non dumtaxat trochaeis (quae celeria quidem sed sine viribus sunt), verum iis qui sunt brevibus longisque mixti, non tamen plures longas quam brevis habent.

Arguments, if pointed and urgent, will use the feet most suitable for this purpose—not trochees, of course (these are rapid but have no force), but those which are composed of shorts and longs but do not have more longs than shorts.
Quintilian 9.4.135⁴⁶

Pure iambic trimeters would fall into this category, though obviously not exclusively. He goes on to discuss iambs in particular and their suitability for “harshness”:

aspera ... iambis maxime concitantur, non solum quod sunt e duabus modo syllabis eoque frequentiore quasi pulsum habent, quae res lenitati contraria est, sed etiam quod omnibus pedibus insurgunt et a brevibus in longas nituntur et crescunt ...

Harshness ... is best produced by iambs, not only because these consist of only two syllables, so that their beat is more frequent as it were (a feature quite contrary to smoothness), but also because they have a rising motion at each foot, and climb and swell from short to long.

Quintilian 9.4.136

The trend continues in the 2nd C. CE *De Metris*, in which Terentianus Maurus asserts the swiftness of the iamb (*concitum celer pedem*, l. 2183), particularly in pure iambic trimeters (*ipse verus integerque sexiens*, l. 2185).⁴⁷ As I mentioned above, Maurus specifically connects his discussion to Catullus’ poem 4. The *Sulpiciae conquestio*, perhaps from the 5th C. CE, identifies the hendecasyllable, the iambic trimeter, and the

⁴⁶ Text and translation of Quintilian from Russell 2001.

⁴⁷ See Morgan 2010b, pp. 135-136.

choliamb all as “running” meters (*curro*, l. 4).⁴⁸ These meters correspond precisely with Catullus’ travel poems, 46, 4, and 31, following their internal chronology (setting out from Bithynia, travel across the Mediterranean, and arrival at Sirmio, respectively). The *Etymologicum Magnum*, an encyclopedia of word origins dating from the 12th C. CE, suggests that *iambos* derives

ἀπὸ τοῦ ἰὸν βάζειν (*EM* 463, l. 27), mean[ing] either ‘from to speak while going’ or ‘from to speak an arrow’. Since from the point of view of meaning, ‘to speak while going’ does not make much sense, the *Etymologicum Magnum* expands on ἰὸν as ‘arrow’: ‘from casting words as weapons’ (ὥς βέλη βάλλειν τὰ λεγόμενα, *EM* 463, l. 28).⁴⁹

The connection between *iambos* and speed is sustained in theory after Catullus, but the work most closely related to poem 4 is the parody *Catalepton* 10, thought by some to be by someone in Catullus’ own circle or at least a near-contemporary (though probably not Vergil himself).⁵⁰ *Catalepton* 10 ironizes the speed of the pure trimeter to lampoon the ex-muleteer Sabinus, who is described as swiftly traveling the roads and tracks of Italy, faster than any rival muleteers, and just as swiftly ascending to a curule magistracy (leaving behind his original name, Quinctio). In Morgan’s view, this poem is a correction for the perceived lack of invective in poem 4.⁵¹ To me, it is an indication that

⁴⁸ Butrica 2000 translates: “hence I’m not flowing along in Phalaecus’ song [*sc.* hendecasyllables] / or in trimeter or in the one, always lame in the same foot [*sc.* the choliamb], that learned its bold anger under the guidance of the Clazomenaeon [*sc.* Hipponax, the choliamb’s supposed creator]. Cf. Morgan 2000, p. 105.

⁴⁹ Rotstein 2010, p. 121. *Iambi* as weapons that can be cast is a trope found in Catullus fr. 3 and poem 116 (where iambic attacks are certainly meant by *tela*); poem 40 turns the trope on its head by having Ravidus hurl *himself* onto stationary *iambi*.

⁵⁰ Fairclough 2000 [1918], pp. 377-378; Watson 2003, p. 149 (with further references). Cf. Morgan 2010b, pp. 157-158, who, hoping against hope, offers up Licinius Calvus, the poet and addressee of poem 50, as a possibility.

⁵¹ Morgan 2010b, pp. 137-139, who argues that *Catalepton* 10 also parodies the “intrinsic artificiality” of its model by “brutally relocat[ing] the poetic scenario from the Isles of Greece to the muddy and unexotic muletracks of northern Italy.” Cf. Birt 1910: “So wird der Iambus als pes citus in den pes minax

the author of *Catalepton* 10 took the association of the iambic trimeter with speed as a given *because of poem 4*; like poem 4, as Morgan notes, *Catalepton* 10 is also a metrical mismatch.⁵² The use of a fast meter to describe something proverbially slow, a muleteer, is humorous precisely because of the absurdity of the contrast. It is only a mismatch, however, because poem 4 decisively establishes the connection between meter and rapidity.

Invective Below the Surface

Catullus purposefully deemphasizes literal invective content and instead privileges speed and motion in poem 4; the speed of the meter is reflected in the speed of the *phaselus*. Despite this shift in emphasis, however, the choice of iambic trimeters carries with it an incontrovertible generic weight bound up with invective. Recognizing this, I argue, Catullus chooses to strew poem 4 with what I refer to as invective markers, words or phrases that in other contexts are unambiguously used to signify invective. It is the speed of the *phaselus* which enables it to avoid being tripped up by invective along the way.

Throughout poem 4, Catullus hints at the voyage not taken: the use of the iambic trimeter for invective. For a poet not to use the dominant feature of the genre *iambos* in its most characteristic meter is highly unusual, yet poem 4 has almost exclusively been

zurückverwandelt (Thus the iamb as a *pes citus* [“swift foot”] is converted back into the *pes minax* [“threatening foot”]),” p. 115.

⁵² Morgan 2010b, p. 139.

read as completely free of invective.⁵³ In actuality, the potential for invective attack is implied by the fact that the ship is threatened at every stage on its journey, but there are also a number of other clues, particularly words which appear elsewhere in the Catullan corpus in unquestionably abusive contexts. In poem 4, these markers of invective are transformed, usually through a double entendre or shift in meaning. The poem is also well known for the interplay of onomatopoeia with the regularity of the iambic meter, most obviously in order to mimic the sounds of a ship in motion.⁵⁴ Soundplay in the poem does not end there, however. There is also an aural echo of a key invective word, where a word having to do with motion (*volare*) sounds like a word associated with abuse elsewhere in Catullus' works (*vorare*).⁵⁵ Invective markers appear in a concatenation near the beginning of the poem, alerting the reader to the strange juxtaposition of iambic meters and invectiveless content. Having the ship initially thumb its beak at invective is an effective demonstration to his audience of the course Catullus could have taken with the poem, but ultimately does not. After this demonstration, Catullus allows space for other concerns—such as an implicit comparison between the *phaselus* and the first ship, the Argo—but nevertheless continues to intersperse subtle invective markers throughout the rest of the poem.

⁵³ The exceptions (Morgan 2010b and Johnson 2012) are both quite recent, and neither goes into any great depth; Morgan brings up the possibility that the *phaselus* looks back on a “violent, dangerous struggle” and notes some typically iambic-invective words (p. 150, n. 92), whereas Johnson suggests that the very fact that the poem is in an iambic meter puts the lie to the otherwise pleasant tone, conjuring up an autobiographical “complaint about [Catullus himself] being financially buggered” in Bithynia by Memmius (p. 48, n. 23; cf. poem 28).

⁵⁴ See Richardson 1972, who notes especially the emphasis on verbs of speaking; Skinner 1993a, who posits an oral performance context, which would make the onomatopoeic effects particularly compelling; and Fredrick 1999, who describes the aural effects of poem 4 in detail.

⁵⁵ This is roughly analogous to the use of *vorare* in poem 35. There the word is used to describe the swift traversal of the distance between Novum Comum and Verona: *quare, si sapiet, viam vorabit* (“therefore, if he is wise, he’ll eat up the road,” l. 7).

On a surface reading of the initial lines of Catullus' poem 4, nothing seems particularly abusive, but a closer look at lines 3-6 reveals a dense grouping of invective markers. Line 3 introduces an unusual structure that is repeated in lines 4-6:

neque ullius natantis || impetum trabis
nequisse praeterire, || sive palmulis
opus foret volare || sive linteo. 5
et hoc negat minacis || Hadriatici
 Catullus 4.3-6

A word break at the 4th-foot caesura is much less common in iambic trimeters generally than at the 3rd-foot caesura. The phrase *impetum trabis* (l. 3) is isolated by the caesura.⁵⁶ A 4th-foot caesura in iambic trimeters, unlike a 3rd-foot caesura, does not partake in Wilkinson's "aesthetic principle of increasing numbers."⁵⁷ Catullus 4.3-6 deviates from this principle markedly, as each successive line contains a 4th- rather than a 3rd-foot caesura. In order to demonstrate this principle, Wilkinson gives the example of Catullus 52:

u _ u _ | u || _ u _ | u _ u x
quid est, Catulle? quid moraris emori?

What's this, Catullus? Why do you delay dying?
 Catullus 52.1[=4]

Here, Wilkinson argues that the shift from a short to a long "artistic unit" creates a "pleasing effect."⁵⁸ His observations are based on an analysis of prose rhythm, however,

⁵⁶ For a succinct analysis of caesurae in iambic trimeters, see Califf 2002, p. 178. By caesurae, I (following Califf) am not referring to sense pauses or punctuation—though these can and often do coincide—but word breaks.

⁵⁷ Wilkinson 1963, p. 97 (cf. p. 175 and Cicero *De Oratore* 3.186). Wilkinson refers to these caesurae as masculine (3rd-foot) and feminine (4th-foot), but strictly speaking the terminology does not accurately map over from the hexameter to the iambic trimeter. The whole concept is based on the observation that the 3rd-foot caesura is more common (De Groot 1935, p. 106, with further references).

⁵⁸ Wilkinson 1963, p. 96-97.

and are necessarily subjective.⁵⁹ It is more prudent simply to note that 3rd-foot caesurae are much more common in Latin iambic trimeters generally and Catullus specifically.

The occasional 4th-foot caesura prevents a sing-song monotony. However, it is strange to have a series of 4th-foot caesurae in a row, exactly the case in 4.3-6, beginning at *impetum trabis*.⁶⁰ The sustained irregular pauses, two of which cry out for punctuation (before *sive* [“whether”] in lines 4 and 5),⁶¹ draw attention to these lines.

The speaker is reporting the speech of the *phaselus*, which declares itself “to have been able to escape the attack of any floating beam.” In a poem noted for its regularity, the caesura just before *impetum* (“attack”) is a clever effect. Without punctuation, the break is very gentle, as seems appropriate for the free motion of the *phaselus* as it avoids the obstacle; but syntactically, the word *impetum* interrupts a series of words in the genitive case (*ullius natantis ... trabis*), breaking the impetus of the metrical pattern precisely at the pause with a word meaning “attack.” Thomson asserts that *impetum* “in this limited sense is an epic word,” whereas *trabis* is “anything made of timber;”⁶² but I suggest that the word’s invective sense is activated here by the meter.⁶³ *Impetus* is also

⁵⁹ Cf. De Groot 1921 and Cicero *De Oratore* 3.186.

⁶⁰ It may well be the largest concentration in Catullus’ iambic trimeters generally, not counting choliamb. The only larger continuous grouping is 29.18-23, but as line 20 is a textual crux, it is suspect.

⁶¹ Quinn 1973 [1970] and Thomson 1997 [1978] print a comma only at line 4, but the disjunction “whether X, whether Y” strongly suggests a sense pause, further stressed by the repetition of caesura and word in successive lines.

⁶² Thomson 1997 [1978], *ad loc.* (cf. Ellis 1889 [1876] *ad loc.*). Catullus also uses *impetum* at 63.89 to describe the attack of Cybele’s lion against Attis, who escapes the assault but ends up a *famula* (l. 90). The word *trabis* is flexible, neither elevated nor particularly prosaic, but interestingly it appears in Ennius’ tragedy *Medea Exul* (fr. 1 Ribbeck 1898 [1852]), referring specifically to the beams that will *become* the Argo. In Catullus, the *trabis* belongs to another ship; could it be that the *phaselus* is a competitor to the Argo, giving the lie to the latter’s status as first ship?

⁶³ So OLD sv. *impetus* 4b. “vigour, ardour (of a speaker or writer).” Cicero at *Orator* 129 describes his style as vigorous (in order to overcome his “middling” ability) in felling his opponents, an example of *impetus* as verbal attack.

used for example in Ennius' *Saturae* for the attack of a parasite, who is described with "a most graphic and mocking sketch of a wolf-like creature lapping up his host's goods":⁶⁴

*quippe sine cura laetus lautus cum advenis
inferctis malis expedito bracchio,
alacer celsus, lupino expectans impetu—
mox cum tu alterius abligurias bona
quid censes domino esse animi? pro divum fidem
is tristest dum cibum servat, tu ridens voras.*

Why, when you come along without a care in the world, gaily spick and span, your cheeks unstuffed, your arm bared ready, tripping a-tip-toe, waiting all taut like a wolf – when soon you are lapping up another's goods, in what mind, think you, is your host? He's down in the dumps, God's truth, while he lays up a store of vittles and you gobble it with a grin.

Ennius *Saturae* ex libr. incert. 14-19.⁶⁵

Though the *Saturae* (at least what remains) did not involve invective against named targets, the tone is far closer to comedy or *iambos* than epic.⁶⁶

As for *trabs* as "timber," it is clear from poem 28 that Catullus is not averse to using *trabs* as a euphemism for *mentula* ("prick"). This use of *trabs* is decidedly iambic in tone, not epic:

*o Memmi, bene me ac diu supinum
tota ista trabe lentus irrumasti.*

Memmius, good and long you stuffed me heels up with that entire beam of yours – slowly!

Catullus 28.9-10

⁶⁴ Van Rooy 1966, p. 32.

⁶⁵ Text and translation from Warmington 1956 [1935], pp. 388-389. I return to the word *voras* (l. 19) below (p. 51).

⁶⁶ For a fuller discussion of mockery with respect to the contents of the *Saturae*, see Van Rooy 1966, pp. 31-33. Muecke 2005, p. 35, distinguishes iambic as "primarily believed to be motivated by a desire for personal revenge" from Old Comedy, which "was funny as well as political." A mix of the two leads to Roman satire.

Here, the *trabs* is Memmius' phallus, whose ramming Catullus admits that he has *not* escaped, unlike the *phaselus*. In the context of poem 4, however, the phrase refers to the speed of the *phaselus* in escaping the "attack of the beam."⁶⁷

Since *iambos* is characteristically used to attack, an ancient reader, confronted with an "attack of the beam" in iambic trimeters, would have every reason to expect iambic invective. In the case of poem 4, the *impetus* is unsuccessful; instead, we have—more or less, given the layers of indirect speech (ll. 1-4 *phaselus* ... / *ait fuisse* ... *celerrimus* / *neque* ... / *nequisse praeterire* ["the ship says that it was swiftest ... and that it wasn't unable to escape"]; ll. 6-7, *negat* ... / *negare litus* ["it denies ... that the shore denies it"])—the *phaselus*' point of view as it successfully *avoids* attacks. Here, Catullus plays on the double meaning of *praeterire*, not only enabling the *phaselus* to escape the physical attack, but "to leave out" or "omit" the attack that would be characteristic of *iambos*.⁶⁸ In other poems, Catullus weaponizes poetry, using it to attack or threaten those he considers to have done him wrong.⁶⁹ In poem 116, for example, poetry is characterized as spears or darts, to be responded to in kind (ll. 3-4, *neu conarere* / *tela infesta* <*meum*> *mittere in usque caput* ["lest you try to send your hostile spears right into my head"]; ll. 7-8, *contra nos tela ista tua evitabimus acta*, / *at fixus nostris tu dabis supplicium* ["we will avoid those spears of yours sent against us, but transfixed by ours

⁶⁷ Presumably ramming is meant.

⁶⁸ The rhetorical device, *praeteritio*, is common in Cicero, who often makes a show of saying he will not mention a particular crime or vice belonging to his target in a way that does indeed mention it, e.g. Cic. *De Provinciis Consularibus* 6, *libidines praetereo* ("I pass over his lusts").

⁶⁹ It is not necessary for his targets to have attacked Catullus via poetry, though a number of Catullus' targets have been tentatively identified with known poets with extant fragments, e.g. Egnatius and Furius Bibaculus. Evidence is sparse for the poetic output of Mamurra (but see poem 105 and Hollis 2007, p. 425, who includes him on his list of poets with no surviving fragments) and Gellius (whom Tatum 1997 identifies as a failed *amicus* of higher status, rather than specifically as a poet; Gellius' *tela* are not necessarily the same as Catullus' *tela*).

you'll pay the price"]). Note too that *evitare* is exactly what the *phaselus* does in poem 4, though it does not follow up with its own attack. In poem 36, (l. 5 *desissemque truces vibrare iambos* ["and had I ceased brandishing my fierce iambs"]) the word *vibrare* suggests the brandishing of weapons, and in poem 40 (l. 2, *agit praecipitem in meos iambos* "he goes headlong into my iambs"), Catullus implies that his *iambi* are an obvious means of defense always at the ready, and that only a fool would attack him. In poem 4, the *impetum trabis* is a metaphor not only for the iambic invective which the deft *phaselus* sails by untouched, but also that which it declines to use in response. That is, the *phaselus* avoids attacks and avoids attacking, instead speeding by the threat. Speed replaces invective as the iambic trimeter's dominant feature in the poem. By contrast with the use of *trabs* in poem 28, this shift is even more striking; whereas the very swift (*celerrimus*, l. 2) *phaselus* is easily able to escape the beam's assault, Catullus himself is forced to take Memmius' beam slowly (*lentus*, 28.10).⁷⁰

At the end of the series of 4th-foot caesurae that began with *impetum*, there is another invective marker, the word *minacis*. *Minax* means something like "threatening" (exactly that which is so conspicuously missing from the poem). The word is separated from the noun it modifies, *Hadriatici*, by another 4th-foot caesura, and from the noun both of those genitives modify (*litus*) by a line break:

∪ _ ∪ _ | ∪ _ ∪ || _ | ∪ _ ∪ x
et hoc negat minacis Hadriatici
 ∪ _ ∪ _ | ∪ ||
negare litus ...

⁷⁰ Cf. Fitzgerald 1995, p. 69; Nappa 2001, pp. 95-96; and Tatum 2007, p. 346.

and it denies that the shore of the threatening Adriatic denies this.
Catullus 4.6-7

A caesura without punctuation between *minacis* and *Hadriatici* is a gentle break, but if the point is the suppression and avoidance of obstacles (i.e., invective markers), a gentle break is appropriate, as the *phaselus* should sail by unhindered despite everything that is thrown at it. It is enough that the rhythm of the line is the same as that of the preceding lines, with the same unusual 4th-foot caesura. As for *minax*, since it is specifically used for threats that are unfulfilled, at least at the moment it appears, the term's appearance in poem 4 is appropriate; the *phaselus* is threatened from all sides, but the threat (i.e., the invective) never materializes.

Minax will become a strong generic marker for iambic invective after Catullus. In his *Epistle* to Augustus, Horace uses the words *minax* and *rabies* to describe invective poetry, detailing precisely why it has become unsuitable:

*libertasque recurrentis accepta per annos
lusit amabiliter, donec iam saevus apertam
in **rabiem** coepit verti iocus et per honestas
ire domos impune **minax**. doluere cruento
dente lacessiti; fuit intactis quoque cura
condicione super communi; ...*

That was a liberty welcomed in year after year as good-natured
Frolicsome play, till the jesting grew vicious and took on the form of
Open attack – the more harmful for being exempt from reproof – on
Old and respectable houses. The bite of those teeth was a painful
Matter, and others, escaping unscathed in the process, were also
Gravely disturbed for the general welfare. ...

Horace *Epistles* 2.1.147-152⁷¹

⁷¹ Translation from Passage 1983.

In the *Ars Poetica*, Horace explicitly connects the *rabies* (“rage” or “fury”) with the *iambos* of Archilochus, the genre’s founder:

Archilochum proprio rabies armavit iambo

Rage armed Archilochus with its special weapon, iambos.
Horace *Ars Poetica* 79⁷²

Archilochus was said to have driven Lycambes and his daughters to suicide with his verses in retaliation for the cancellation of Archilochus’ engagement to Neoboule, one of Lycambes’ daughters.⁷³ In context, the constellation of words connected to *rabies* in *Epistles* 2.1 (*saevus*, *iocus*, *impune*, and *minax*) briefly describes the chronology of a poetics of personal attack, the key function of *iambos*.

Minax appears only twice more in Catullus, at 63.84 and at 115.8. There are strong reasons for thinking of the galliambic poem 63 as another voyage not taken by the *phaselus* poem. Thematically, poem 63 is about Attis’ inability to escape the coast of Asia Minor, having come as a Greek on a swift ship (*celeri rate*, l. 1).⁷⁴ Poem 4 is about the *phaselus* escaping unhindered from almost the same place, and, though the ship is native to Asia Minor, it is nonetheless a Greek type of ship (φάσηλος); the poem is also peppered with Grecisms, both words (*phaselus*) and constructions (*ait fuisse* ...

⁷² Translation from Barchiesi 2001, p. 144.

⁷³ See Archilochus fr. 196aW (for example) for the shaming of the daughters and fr. 172-181 for a direct attack on Lycambes. The canonical creator of the limping iambic meter, Hipponax, in a biographical tradition clearly modeled on Archilochus, was similarly said to have driven the sculptors Bupalus and Athenis to suicide (see e.g. Pliny *Natural History* 36.12) for mocking him with an unflattering statue.

⁷⁴ Strictly speaking, Phrygia and Mt. Dindymus are both inland and Mt. Ida is in the Troad, making it likely that Attis arrives at and flees to the Aegean, whereas the Pontic coast faces the Black Sea.

celerrimus), as well as with many Greek locations.⁷⁵ The context of 63 in which *minax* appears also includes *impetum* within 5 lines:

ait haec minax Cybebe religatque iuga manu.
ferus ipse sese adhortans rapidum incitat animo, 85
vadit, fremit, refringit virgulta pede vago.
at ubi umida albicantis loca litoris adiit,
tenerumque vidit Attin prope marmora pelagi,
facit impetum. ille demens fugit in nemora fera;
ibi semper omne vitae spatium famula fuit. 90

So spoke Cybébé in rage, with one hand slipped the yoke
pin. The beast took off
in a feral fury, driven wild by its self-incitement to
savagery, 85
sprang on roaring, paws in motion sending the brushwood
skittering.
But when it neared the sea-damp shoreline, the bright white
stretch of the littoral,
and there saw delicate Attis standing by the sea's marbled
infinity,
it charged. Demented, she scuttled headlong back to the
wild woods, a fugitive,
there to remain for ever, a lifelong slave girl, a feminine
acolyte. 90

Catullus 63.84-90⁷⁶

It is difficult to say much with certainty about the generic character of galliambics.

Though they are clearly etymologically linked to *iambos*, galliambics are so rare that any conflation with iambics would be an overstatement. Worthy of note, however, is that just before *minax* and *impetum* appear, the goddess Cybele (*minax Cybebe*, l. 84) is at her most vituperative, loosing her savage lion and spewing invective at Attis (ll. 78-83), combining a physical and verbal attack.

⁷⁵ Fordyce 1961, pp. 99ff. Cf. Wiseman 1979, p. 168; Thomson 1997 [1978], pp. 214ff.

⁷⁶ Translation by Green 2005.

The word *minax* also appears in connection with Mamurra, at the end of poem 115, directly modifying *mentula*:

non homo, sed vero mentula magna minax.

not a man, but really a great threatening prick.
Catullus 115.8

Mentula (“prick”) in Catullus is a pseudonym for Mamurra, “and a very poor disguise for him when [poem] 29, where he was called *ista ... diffututa mentula* [at line 13], had been so widely circulated.”⁷⁷ In addition to the story of Attis, *minax* recalls the invective of the Mamurra poems, and thus a denial (*negare*) of something that is *minax* is a denial of invective *iambos* generally.

Catullus’ *mentula magna minax* (115.8) parodies a line from Ennius (***machina magna minax** minitatur maxima muris*), turning the word *minax* to an invective purpose from its original epic context.⁷⁸ In poem 115 (in elegiac couplets rather than in an iambic meter)⁷⁹ *minax* is part of a joke about Mamurra’s estate, a symptom of his profligacy (cf. poem 114). The poem is also rife with sexual humor, where descriptions of the estate are also describing Mamurra’s excessive sexual conquests.⁸⁰ Sexual innuendo and direct sexual attack are common features in *iambos*;⁸¹ in Roman thinking, an excess of sexuality (and/or effeminacy) is interchangeable with profligacy, as both are symptoms of a lack of

⁷⁷ Neudling 1955, p. 115.

⁷⁸ Ennius *Varia* fr. 24 (Spurious?) in Warmington 1956 [1935], p. 456 (= fr. 620 Skutsch 1985); cf. Thomson 1997 [1978], pp. 552 & 554. The line is in dactylic hexameter and is tentatively thought to come from the *Annales*.

⁷⁹ I address elegiac couplets in Chapter Four (pp. 184-219 below), but see Heyworth 2001, pp. 137-139.

⁸⁰ See Thomson 1997 [1978], p. 552, and Green 2005, p. 269. Cf. Catullus 29.8.

⁸¹ As in Archilochus fr. 196aW.

self-control; profligacy and greed, of course, are Mamurra's cardinal vices.⁸² The proximity of *trabis* and *minacis* corresponds closely with *mentula magna minax*.

We are not quite finished with allusions to Mamurra between *impetum trabis* in 4.3 and *minacis* in line 6. A further group of examples is dependent on the aural similarity between the word *volare*, here innocently describing the speed of the *phaselus*, and the key invective word *vorare*, which Catullus uses in poem 29 in varying forms to describe the vices of Mamurra and his supporters Caesar and Pompey (*vorax*, ll. 2 & 10; *devorare*, l. 22). Poem 4 displays a dizzying amount of soundplay, which has been investigated before: Richardson brought attention to the many words having to do with speech, and Skinner posited oral performance of the poem, citing the sheer number of onomatopoeic effects.⁸³ Fredrick takes it to a much deeper level. He sees the poem as a mirror, with the *phaselus* looking back over its past and recollecting it via an interlocutor. This is echoed on the syntactic level with a great number of pairs (culminating in *gemelle Castor et gemelle Castoris* ["twin Castor and twin of Castor"], l. 27) and on the aural level with repetitions of words, letters and sounds.⁸⁴ An aural echo of one of Catullus' (and the Romans' generally) most targeted vices, rapaciousness, fits into this category. Here, the echo is not internal, but external to poem 29; the mirror is held up to what a "normal" iambic poem should look like. Indeed, metrically speaking, poem 29 forms a

⁸² See Pliny *Natural History* 36.48. Though she does not mention Mamurra, see Edwards 1993, pp. 81-92 on the link between adultery and effeminacy (including a discussion of Pompey and Caesar) and pp. 173-206 on prodigality.

⁸³ Richardson 1972 and Skinner 1993a.

⁸⁴ Fredrick 1999, pp. 63-64.

natural pair with poem 4.⁸⁵ There are also thematic similarities. In poem 29, Mamurra cuts a swift swath of destruction through a series of five sources of wealth (*paterna prima ... bona, / secunda praeda Pontica, inde tertia Hibera ... / Galliae ... et Britanniae* [“first his paternal goods, second the Pontic booty, thence Spain third, Gaul and Britain”], ll. 17-20), gobbling up riches wherever he goes and jumping in and out of bed (*perambulabit omnium cubilia*, 29.7). In poem 4, it is a series of five places (the Adriatic coast, the Cyclades, Rhodes, the Propontis, and the Pontic coast, ll. 6-9) that attempt to slow or destroy the *phaselus*, which sails by untouched.

Words having to do with *vorare* appear three times in poem 29: *vorax* appears in lines 2 and 10, and *devorare* appears in line 22. As I mentioned above, the gluttony of Mamurra in poem 29 taps into a constellation of related vices, basically the full range that a traditional iambic poet would typically attack and attempt to publicly shame: a general lack of self-control, greed, profligacy, effeminacy, and inability to reign oneself in sexually.⁸⁶ In Ennius’ *Saturae* 1, the successful parasite stuffs himself (*voras*, l. 19); in Catullus’ poem 28, Memmius stuffs Catullus with his *trabs* (= *mentula*);⁸⁷ in poem 29, Caesar’s “*mentula*,” Mamurra, stuffs himself.⁸⁸ But in poem 4, the *phaselus* avoids stuffing altogether, able to fly (*volare*, l. 5) beyond the *impetum* of *ullius trabis* (ll. 3-4).

The invective word *vorare* is converted into the movement word *volare*, perfectly

⁸⁵ Despite the substitutions at 29.3 and possibly at 29.20, commentators overwhelmingly classify poems 4 and 29 together as “pure” trimeters.

⁸⁶ For gluttony and effeminacy as related vices, see Corbeill 1996, pp. 128ff. For a lack of self-control in terms of sexuality and greed or gluttony, see Richlin 1992 [1983], pp. 26-30 and Richlin 1988 *passim*.

⁸⁷ This is perhaps an indication that Catullus is unwilling or unable to play the parasite successfully. Rather than stuffing himself with food or riches, he gets himself stuffed.

⁸⁸ In stuffing himself, Mamurra contaminates Caesar and Pompey, who, unlike Memmius, are unwilling or unable to rein in their inferior and are thus guilty of the same vices by association. The pairing of poems 28 and 29 thus sets up a contrast between patrons who are too harsh and patrons who are too liberal (*sinistra liberalitas*, 29.15).

mirroring the overall conversion from invective content to speedy invective avoidance in the same medium, the iambic trimeter.

Reading *vorare* behind *volare* also opens up a potential connection to the greed exhibited in poems 12 and 25, the napkin thefts.⁸⁹ In a surface reading of poem 4, the nautical meanings of *lintheum* and *palmula* are clearly meant:

... *sive palmulis*
opus foret volare sive lintheo.

... whether there should be a need to fly with oars, or with a sail.
Catullus 4.4-5

But *lintheum* can also mean napkin, as at 12.3 (*linthea*) & 11 (*lintheum*). Asinius Marrucinus snatches the cloths that travelled all the way from Spain (*nam sudaria Saetaba ex Hiberis*, 12.14), from West to East. In poem 4, the travel is in the other direction, and instead of being the stolen object, the *lintheum* prevents the *phaselus* from being caught. Note also the odd Greek word *mnemosynum* at 12.13. Regardless of its Spanish origins, the word *mnemosynum* effectively makes the *lintheum* a Greek keepsake. In similar fashion, the word *phaselus* makes what is in origin a Phrygian craft Greek.

Though poem 25 avoids the word *lintheum* (but again refers to a *sudariumque Saetabum*, 25.7), it instead heightens the rapidity of the theft by describing the thief Thallus—a Greek name—as soft (*mollis*, a sign of effeminacy). This stands in stark contrast to his swift rapaciousness; he is *turbida rapacior procella*, “more grasping than a stormy gale” (25.4). Thallus’ softness is aurally underscored by the series of liquids and

⁸⁹ Poem 12 is in hendecasyllables (see Chapter Three, esp. pp. 154-168 below). Poem 25 is iambic tetrameter catalectic, a meter common in Aristophanes and found in the archaic iambographer Hipponax. Catullus is more careful to avoid substitutions than Aristophanes. “The metrical treatment here is similar to that of poem 29: eight of the thirteen lines are free of spondees” (Thomson 1997 [1973], p. 266).

sibilants Catullus uses to describe him, particularly with diminutives or words with similar endings to diminutives (-ul- or -ill-):

*Cinaede Thalle, mollior cuniculi capillo
vel anseris medullula vel imula oricilla
vel pene languido senis situque araneoso*

Effeminate Thallus, softer than rabbit's fur
or down of goose or lap of ear,
or dotard's drooping penis and its dusty cobwebs
Catullus 25.1-3

In poem 4, the word *palmula* can mean an oar, but it can also be a diminutive of *palma*, “palm” or “hand,” perhaps connecting it with Thallus. Change *volare* to *vorare*, and you have “whether there should be a need to devour with handsies or with a napkin.” Lines 4 and 5 of poem 4 have a very similar sound, with a high concentration of liquids and sibilants:

*nequisse praeterire sive palmulis
opus foret volare sive linteo.*
Catullus 4.4-5⁹⁰

Catullus' threatened punishment for Thallus' theft is telling. He threatens whipping and branding, but uses the simile of a boat caught in a storm:

*ne laneum latusculum manusque mollicellas
inusta turpiter tibi flagella conscribillent,
et insolenter aestues, velut minuta magno
depressa navis in mari, vesaniente vento.*

... if you don't want your fleecy little flanks and tender poofy paw-waws
all scribbled with the lash of whips, burned with a shameful branding, on

⁹⁰ Cf. Fredrick 1999, p. 64f.

heat (not in your usual way), just like a little skiff that's caught in a heavy storm at sea, a hurricane of gale force.

Catullus 25.10-13⁹¹

The *phaselus* of poem 4 is unswayed by stormy seas (*horridamque Thracia / Propontida*), but in poem 25 Catullus explicitly links the image of a storm-tossed ship with physical abuse; and more than that, to punishment via *written invective*, i.e. *iambos*. The word *conscribillent* means “to scribble on,” with Thallus’ *latusculum manusque mollicellas* as the medium instead of papyrus; but in all probability, poem 25 itself *is* the iambic punishment. Thus written invective, like the stormy sea, is something the *phaselus* deftly avoids. This connection is strengthened by the end of line 6 with *Hadriatici*, not in itself an invective marker—if we consider the series of 4th-foot caesurae to be blocking out a discrete section of the poem, there is a high incidence of invective markers between *impetum* (l. 3) and *minacis* (l. 6)—but nonetheless the Adriatic is a very stormy sea.⁹² The napkin-thief Thallus snatches the *sudarium* with his *ungues* (*unguibus*, 25.9) and his punishment is compared to a sudden storm; the *phaselus* uses its *palmulae* and *linteum* in such a way that it avoids being delayed by attacking or by being attacked, making *use* of the wind rather than being tripped up by it.

In the rest of the poem, reminiscences of abuse are much more sporadic, but by clustering a series of invective markers early in the poem, Catullus reminds his audience of the typical function of iambic poems and thereby primes them to notice further

⁹¹ Translation from Green 2005, though *aestues* better marks the seething of the storm than an association with heat.

⁹² Cf. Caesar *Bellum Civile* 1.25.

markers as they appear. As I mentioned before, the end of the initial sequence of invective markers moves straightaway into the list of places the *phaselus* passes:

*et hoc negat minacis Hadriatici
negare litus insulasve Cycladas
Rhodumque nobilem horridamque Thracia
Propontida trucemve Ponticum sinum,*
Catullus 4.6-9

In line 7, the Cycladic isles attest to the *phaselus*' speed. These were the home of two of the canonical Archaic iambic poets: Archilochus of Paros and Thasos and Semonides of Amorgos. These are the iambographers associated with the iambic trimeter.⁹³ Thus the islands associated with the progenitors of invective poetry acknowledge Catullus' *phaselus*, but fail to trip it up or slow it down.⁹⁴ The iambic meter is acknowledged, iambic abuse bypassed.

The other places that acknowledge (or more accurately do not deny) the *phaselus*' passing are all connected in some way with the myth of the Argo or the setting of the galliambic poem 63, as I mentioned earlier (pp. 22-30 above).⁹⁵ These include the "menacing" Adriatic shore (*minacis Hadriatici* / ... *litus*, ll. 6-7), which the Argo visited;⁹⁶ "noble" Rhodes (*Rhodumque nobilem*, l. 8), the birthplace of Apollonius, author of the *Argonautica* and colleague of Callimachus; and the "bristling" Propontis

⁹³ Neither these iambographers nor the Cycladic islands are associated with the choliamb, whose "limping" iambic meter would naturally be out of place in the description of a swift and steady ship.

⁹⁴ It is worth mentioning that when spondaic fifth feet occur in Catullus' hexameters, the line often ends in a four-syllable Greek name (*Aeëteos*, 64.1; *Amphitriten*, 64.11; *Minotauro*, 64.79, etc.). The *phaselus* in poem 4 is never slowed down, even by the five-syllable *Hadriatici* (l. 6) or the four-syllable *Propontida* (l. 9).

⁹⁵ The Cyclades are not associated with the myth of the Argo except indirectly; the island of Thera is given an aetiology at Apollonius *Argonautica* 4.1749-1764.

⁹⁶ *Argonautica* 4.305-521; cf. Strabo *Geography* 1.2.10.

(*horridamque Thracia / Propontida*, ll. 8-9)⁹⁷ and “savage” Pontic shore (*trucemve Ponticum sinum*, l. 9), not only the birthplace of the Argo (and the *phaselus*), but the setting of Catullus’ poem 63. These connections with the Argo not only make the *phaselus*’ feat all the more impressive, but again are perhaps a reference to the other traditional use of the iambic meter for dialogue, since the Argo had a magical speaking beam (see pp. 22-30 above).

Perhaps the best evidence for the intentional avoidance of invective is that the *phaselus* sails swift and untroubled past a word Catullus specifically uses elsewhere to refer to invective poetry (*iambi*):

∪ ∟ ∪ ∟ | ∪ ∟ ∪ || ∟ ∟ | ∪ ∟ ∟ x
*Propontida **trucemve** Ponticum sinum,*
 Catullus 4.9

The word *trucemve* is isolated by the fourth-foot caesura from the phrase it most naturally accompanies (*Ponticum sinum*) and by the repetition of sounds surrounding it (*Propontida ... Ponticum*) with the same accentuation and metrical phrase (*long-short-long*). Catullus uses the word as an attributive adjective with *iambi* in poem 36:

desissemque truces vibrare iambos
 Catullus 36.5⁹⁸

For Catullus, *truces iambi* are verbal weapons.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ See Thomson 1997 [1978] *ad loc.* on the *Thracias*, a wind originating in Thrace. The joke with *horridam* may have something to do with the use in a highly polished poem of a word used for unpolished literature (as at Cicero *Orator* 152 and *Brutus* 238) as much as for rough country or waters such as that around the Propontis (for which specifically cf. Valerius Flaccus *Argonautica* 2.644-645).

⁹⁸ Poem 36, in hendecasyllables, is addressed in Chapter Three (at pp. 143-154 below). See Heyworth 2001 for the possibility that Catullus treats hendecasyllables as *iambi* (he only uses the word *iambi* in hendecasyllables). Cf. the *trux mentula* of *Priapea* 2 (= Bücheler 1904 [1862], fr. 85; see Morgan 2010b, pp. 140-141).

Catullus returns to *palmulas* as the middle word of line 17. In its earlier appearance, in addition to fleshing out the iambic connection of *volare/vorare*, the diminutive added to the personification of the *phaselus*, as “little hands” rather than strictly oars.¹⁰⁰ Now, while the word never loses that sense of personification, it performs a second function, this time marking the transition between *phaselus*-as-tree and *phaselus*-as-ship. The *trux* Pontic coast is where the *phaselus* was born:

... *trucemve Ponticum sinum,*
ubi iste post phaselus antea fuit
comata silva; nam Cytorio in iugo
loquente saepe sibilum edidit coma.
Amastri Pontica et Cytore buxifer,
tibi haec fuisse et esse cognitissima
ait phaselus: ultima ex origine
tuo stetisse dicit in cacumine,
tuo imbuisse palmulas in aequore,

Catullus 4.9-17

But *iambos* itself could also be said to be born from that which is *trux*: invective. Here, the *phaselus* flies not only from its geographical origins but from its conceptual generic origins.

The physical personification of the *phaselus*-as-tree begins with the Homeric “jaded metaphor” of foliage as hair.¹⁰¹ The personification continues, and by line 17 not only has the foliage engaged in speech (*loquente ... coma*, l. 12), but the *palmulae* blur seamlessly between hands—i.e., branches—and oars, as if the tree merely stoops to dip her hands in the water (*imbuisse palmulas in aequore*, l. 17) and keeps going, becoming the *phaselus* completely in the following lines, yet still personified as a slave bearing her

⁹⁹ Catullus’ other use of the term *trux* is also used in an invective context, in the middle of 69.6, to insult Rufus about his body odor; here the iambic weapon is in active use.

¹⁰⁰ See e.g. Quinn 1973 [1970] *ad loc.*

¹⁰¹ Quinn 1973 [1970] *ad loc.*

master (*erum tulisse*, l. 19). The word *comata* only appears once more in Catullus, at 29.3:

_ _ ∪ _ | ∪ || _ ∪ _ | ∪ _ ∪ x
*Mamurram habere quod **Comata** Gallia*
 ∪ _ ∪ _ | ∪ || _ ∪ _ | ∪ _ ∪ x
habebat ante et ultima Britannia?
 Catullus 29.3-4

If that were the end of it, it could be coincidence, but until Mamurra gets hold of it, “long-haired Gaul” *used* to have the loot: *ante* of 29.4 points to *antea* of 4.10, and the same mismatch of time occurs in both lines. Catullus is packing a rich amount of meaning into line 4.10, making special note of what once was and what is, as for the arc of the poem as a whole, which describes the youth and senescence of the *phaselus*. Time, first signaled by *ubi*, here straddling the meanings “where” and “when,” is muddled; *post* comes before *antea*, mirroring the course of the poem, which continually jumps through time, but also matching the temporal order of 29.4. What is after (*post*, 4.10; *habere*, 29.3) comes before in each line; what is before (*antea*, 4.10; *ante*, 29.4) comes after.¹⁰² More than that, the other origin of the loot is *ultima Britannia* (29.4); the *phaselus* originally stood as a tree on the peak *ultima ex origine* (“from its furthest beginning,” 4.15). These verbal echoes of the only other (mostly) pure iambic trimeter poem in Catullus help keep the more typical association of *iambos* in the audience’s mind.

¹⁰² Chronology is restored in line 25: *haec prius fuere: nunc recondita*.

Another word associated with violence and a lack of self-control appears in the same section (at l. 16), *impotentia*, unusual because of the lengthening of the final syllable before the combination *fr-*.¹⁰³

◡ _ ◡ _ | ◡ || _ ◡ _ | ◡ _ ◡ _
*et inde tot per **impotentia** freta*
 ◡ _ ◡ _ | ◡
erum tulisse,

4.18-19

The word is connected with both violence and pure iambics by Terentianus Maurus two centuries after Catullus; he calls the pure iambic line (*ipse verus integerque sexiens*, l. 2185) an *ultor impotens tui* (“an avenger beside himself,” l. 2187).¹⁰⁴ For Terentianus Maurus at least, this connects the meter with unbridled (and *unable* to be bridled) and justified (as *ultor* implies) aggression. Again the *phaselus* avoids a word conceptually connected with the violent words of invective, and indeed a word that arguably represents the central personality flaw targeted by Roman invective: an effeminate lack of self-control, a sort of Ur-vice that gives rise to greed, gluttony, excessive sexuality, and the like. “[I]t was a Roman instinct that *any* moral lapse might well indicate *every* moral lapse,” and a lack of self-control is in a sense part of every such lapse.¹⁰⁵ The *phaselus* presents itself (or is presented as presenting itself) as *utterly* in control. The *freta* (“seas”) that it sails through cannot stop themselves from attacking, but the *phaselus* sails past, untouched by the violence.

¹⁰³ See Fordyce 1961 *ad loc.*

¹⁰⁴ Translation by Morgan 2010b, p. 136.

¹⁰⁵ Tatum 2007, p. 335. Catullus uses the strategy of calling himself *impotens* in poem 8 (see Chapter Two, esp. pp. 111-122) to shock himself out of the moral lapse of his lovesickness (Adler 1981, pp. 8-12; cf. Greene 1995, pp. 81f.).

Returning to the personification of the *phaselus*, it is revealed to have a foot (*pedem*, l. 21), often a metrical codeword in Roman poetry.¹⁰⁶ This “foot” is acted upon by *Iuppiter secundus*:

— ∪ — ∪ — ∪ X
 ... *sive* *utrumque* ***Iuppiter***
 ∪ — ∪ — ∪ || — ∪ — ∪ — ∪ X
simul ***secundus*** *incidisset in* *pedem*;

... or if a second Jupiter
 had fallen upon [= assailed] each sheet [= foot]
 4.20-21¹⁰⁷

Logically (if not actually), if there is a *Iuppiter secundus*, there is a *Iuppiter primus*.¹⁰⁸

Ellis identifies *Iuppiter secundus* with Ζεὺς οὐριος, “used *generally* ... and *specifically* of the Chalcedonian Zeus Urius invoked by travellers sailing along the Bithynian coast.”¹⁰⁹

Quinn identifies the same phrase as “a following wind” with a secondary meaning of “well-disposed;”¹¹⁰ presumably Jupiter could just as easily be unfavorable. And indeed, if we accept the idea of the voyage not taken, i.e. matching the iambic meter with invective content, there is another type of *Iuppiter* whom Catullus *could* have chosen but instead suppresses: i.e., the kind of avenging Zeus to whom the fox prays for vengeance in Archilochus fr. 177W:¹¹¹

ὦ Ζεῦ, πάτερ Ζεῦ, σὸν μὲν οὐρανοῦ κράτος,
 σὺ δ’ ἔργ’ ἐπ’ ἀνθρώπων ὀρέῃς

¹⁰⁶ The classic example is Cupid’s theft of a foot in Ovid’s *Amores* 1.1.1-4.

¹⁰⁷ My translation.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. Cicero *De Natura Deorum* 3.53, who identifies three different Jupiters, none of which are the *Iuppiter secundus* of poem 4.

¹⁰⁹ Ellis 1889 [1876] *ad loc.*, with further references. Cf. Latte 1960, p. 273.

¹¹⁰ Quinn 1973 [1970] *ad loc.*

¹¹¹ Catullus was certainly familiar with fr. 172W (see poem 40), and West identifies fr. 172-181W as likely parts of the same poem.

λεωργὰ καὶ θεμιστά, σοὶ δὲ θηρίων
ὑβρις τε καὶ δίκη μέλει

Zeus, father Zeus, yours is the rule in heaven, you oversee men's deeds,
wicked and lawful, and both the violence and the justice of beasts are your
concern.

Archilochus 177W¹¹²

An 'invective' Jupiter is implied by the choice of words *incidisset in pedem*. Not only does *Iuppiter* (– ∪ –) quite literally fall upon *in pedem* (– ∪ –) in the same metrical *sedes* at the end of the line, but *incidere* can mean “to attack” or “to assail,” and *pedem* of course often has the meaning of a metrical foot. But instead of an angry god at the heels of the *phaselus*, we instead have a favorable wind helping the ship keep a steady clip.

Catullus' poem 4 takes advantage of the speed of the pure iambic trimeter to keep the *phaselus* just out of reach of words or phrases which would otherwise indicate aggression, delivering it *ad usque limpidum lacum* (“all the way up to the limpid lake,” l. 24) free of violence. Before the skiff reaches this point of safety, the threat is always present, but never comes to fruition. Such words are often indicated either by dint of aggressive usage elsewhere in Catullus specifically or Latin literature generally.

Conclusion

Catullus in his iambic poems usually confirms the association of *iambos* (personal poetry in iambic meters) and abuse, which his audience would have expected. Catullus fulfills this expectation in the political invective poems 29 and 52. In poem 4, however, though it is in pure iambs and not part of a drama, there is no open invective. This flies

¹¹² Translation by Gerber 1999, p. 193.

in the face of theory, which links a more spondaic iambic line (i.e., one which allows substitutions) to a lessening of iambic aggression.¹¹³

If it is from that fundamental component of the iambic line, $\cup \text{ —}$, that the aggressive energy of the form is perceived to derive, then a form of iambic composition that eschews the option of qualifying its iambic character by the inclusion of spondees is *ipso facto* all the more aggressive.¹¹⁴

At least one reader of Catullus, the author of *Catalepton* 10, took poem 4 as an opportunity to ironize the speed of the poem by applying the description to a mule rather than a speedy *phaselus* and by reinserting overt invective. An observant audience of poem 4, however, will have noticed that the *phaselus* speeds its master past all manner of invective-tinged pitfalls, hinting strongly at *iambos*' main association. Iambic rapidity makes the *phaselus* too fast for invective to stick: Catullus sets two iambic features at odds with one another, and speed wins out.

¹¹³ As at Horace *Ars Poetica* 251-262.

¹¹⁴ Morgan 2010b, p. 148.

Chapter Two. *Harsher Measures: Choliambic Invective and Critical Diagnoses*

Introduction

In Catullus's choliambic invective poems, he typically uses the highly distinctive ending of the line in order to underscore particularly virulent insults and to give a negative cast to more ambivalent terms or even those that in other contexts would have a positive association. He uses the same technique of drawing special attention to the end of the line in poems not exhibiting outright abuse—at least not exclusively. These poems are loosely connected by a diagnosis of physical, emotional, and literary-critical ills, where each poem, even if unsuccessful at providing a curative *per se*, at least points to the possibility of a fix. This bent towards diagnosis reflects and recasts major concerns of the choliamb's creator, Hipponax, whose poems are often marked by complaint—often over medical issues—and the resurrected 'Hipponax' of Callimachus' *Iamboi*, which diagnose artistic problems, whether literary or plastic.¹

Choliambics

Choliambics, also known as scazons or limping iambs, are a variation on the iambic trimeter and are thought to have been invented by the Greek poet Hipponax in the 6th C BCE.² The difference from the trimeter is the choliamb's regularized spondaic final foot, which draws special attention to the end of each line. Catullus uses a stricter schema than

¹ As Acosta-Hughes 2002, pp. 32-35, shows, this creative criticism is also ultimately based on Hipponax (see pp. 82-85 below).

² For Hipponax as creator of the choliamb, see e.g. Battezzato 2009, p. 137.

Hipponax, with substitutions allowed only at the beginning of the first and second metra (Hipponax allows another at the beginning of the third):³

— — — | — — — | — — — x

Additionally, Catullus allows a resolution of a long syllable into two shorts in three places. This occurs at the second syllable of the first metron:

— — — — | — — — — | — — — — x
confutuere et putare ceteros hircos
 Catullus 37.5

At the fourth syllable of the first metron:

— — — — | — — — — | — — — — x
quem non in aliqua re videre Suffenum
 Catullus 22.19

And finally at the second syllable of the second metron:

— — — — | — — — — | — — — — x
vidistis ipso rapere de rogo cenam
 Catullus 59.3

Each of these occurs only once, making them stand out as purposeful exceptions (see pp. 67-82 and 85-99 below).⁴

Catullus' final choliambic metron, however, is set in stone as a short syllable followed by three long syllables; this gives the meter its characteristic limping cadence. Structurally, this makes it an ideal place to call attention to certain words or phrases. Not only is the "limp" isolated at the end of the line, but it has a very regular and recognizable

³ This results in five long syllables in a row, and is known as ischiorrhogic ("broken-hipped"); see West 1982, p. 161. It was apparently more common in the poet Ananius than in Hipponax (cf. Ananius T2 in Gerber 1999, pp. 500-503), which may explain Catullus' rejection of the practice. I treat the final anceps as functionally long.

⁴ See Green 2005, pp. 33-34. Ellis 1889 [1879], p. xlii, suggests that "it is perhaps a mere accident that the tribrach in the third and fourth foot, both found in Martial, do not occur" in Catullus.

rhythm; this makes it both visually and aurally distinct, calling attention to itself for both readers and listeners. The end of the line is also directly related to invective content; the most important document discussing this peculiar force of the final metron is Demetrius *On Style*.⁵ Demetrius explains that Hipponax “in his desire to abuse his enemies ... shattered the meter [*sc.* iambic trimeter], making it lame instead of straightforward, and unrhythmical, i.e., suitable for vigorous abuse” (λοιδορῆσαι ... βουλόμενος τοὺς ἐχθροὺς ἔθραυσεν τὸ μέτρον καὶ ἐποίησεν χωλὸν ἀντὶ εὐθέος καὶ ἄρρυθμον, τουτέστι δεινότητι πρέπον καὶ λοιδορίᾳ).⁶

Catullus' Choliambos

Catullus' eight poems in choliambos can be organized into two main groups: invective, and what I will call diagnostic. When Catullus uses the choliamb for its traditional purpose, explicit invective, he unleashes devastating abuse against clear but politically irrelevant targets (poems 37, 39, and 59), in contrast with his iambic trimeters (29 and 52), which are overtly political. This is consistent with the contrast between the creator of *iambos*, Archilochus, who does not shy away from political criticism, and the creator of the choliamb, Hipponax, who avoids politics completely.⁷ The invective in the

⁵ The dating of this work is uncertain, but the work is probably from either the 1st C BCE or CE, and is widely considered to draw heavily from Hellenistic theory dating from the 3rd and 2nd C BCE; this suggests that its contents are very likely to have reflected views on Hipponax and the choliamb prevalent in Catullus' time. For the 1st C BCE date, see e.g. Schenkeveld 2000; for the later date, see e.g. Paffenroth 1994, esp. p. 280 n. 2. Some have argued for a 3rd-2nd C BCE date (e.g. Grube 1961), but it is likely that Demetrius was compiling earlier material.

⁶ Demetrius *On Style* 301. Text and translation from Gerber 1999, pp. 350-351 (= Hipponax T12). See also Hephaestion *Handbook of Meters* 5.4 (= Hipponax T13), which describes specifically what makes the choliamb different from the iambic trimeter, i.e. that the final foot is functionally a spondee rather than an iamb.

⁷ Carey 2007, pp. 154 & 162.

choliamb is also typically threatening; while still devastating, the trimeter poems use a strategy of rhetorical or direct questioning. In poem 29, this gives the illusion of dialogue with the targets; it may well be that Julius Caesar interpreted the poem as opening up a dialogue, since he supposedly invited Catullus to dinner the same day that he read it.⁸ In both trimeter poems, the questions also give the impression that Catullus' complaints are about a set and unchangeable state of affairs. In poem 52 the complaint is self-addressed (*quid moraris emori?*, ll. 1 & 4: "why do you put off dying?"); in poem 29 the questions *quis potest pati, nisi impudicus et vorax et aleo* ("who can bear it, except a shameless and greedy and gambling man?," ll. 1-2) and *haec videbis et feres* ("will you see and endure these things?," ll. 5 & 9) are answered respectively with *es* ("you are," l. 10) and—implicit in the perfect of *perdidistis* (l. 24)—"you already have." Mamurra's tearing through paternal and provincial fortunes is already under way, making the issue effectively moot. To put it another way, there is no threat against or comeuppance for Catullus' targets beyond the insults in the poem itself. By contrast, in the invective choliamb, a punishment *besides the poem* is either threatened or described as having already been enacted.

The second group of choliambic poems (8, 22, and 44) is diagnostic, often involving the identification and treatment of literary-critical defects. In poem 22, Catullus uses the choliamb's weighted ending to distinguish not only Suffenus from his poetry, but himself from Suffenus, despite a nod to the universality of blindness to one's own faults. Catullus indulges in the conceit of being at a loss as to how to categorize

⁸ Suetonius *Divus Iulius* 73. Of the poems that target Mamurra, poem 29 is the most likely candidate for prompting the dinner, as it also vilifies Caesar's conduct.

Suffenus, given the stark contrast between his poetry and his personality (*hoc quid putemus esse*, “what are we to think of this,” l. 12); he lists Suffenus’ good and bad points while metrically cueing the audience to take a negative view. In poem 44, Catullus uses choliambic poetry to purge himself of a cold which, as he reveals, he has caught from reading Sestius’ frigid work. In poem 8, Catullus attempts to rid himself of lovesickness for Lesbia by pitting iambic against erotic in the poem; the outcome is ultimately inconclusive.⁹ Poem 31, which shares a number of links with poem 4 (see Chapter One, pp. 19-62), is something of an outlier, lacking in invective content but acting as a curative for physical and emotional ills rather than merely poetic ones.

Below, I analyze poem 37 to demonstrate how Catullus uses the distinctiveness of the choliambic line in order to highlight invective content. I then show how the same metrical techniques are adapted to and are crucial for a full understanding of the diagnostic poems (22, 44, 8, and 31).

Catullus 37: Choliambic Invective

*Salax taberna vosque contubernales,
a pilleatis nona fratribus pila,
solis putatis esse mentulas vobis,
solis licere, quidquid est puellarum,
confutuere et putare ceteros hircos? 5
an, continenter quod sedetis insulsi
centum an ducenti, non putatis ausurum
me una ducentos irrumare sessores?
atqui putate: namque totius vobis
frontem tabernae sopionibus scribam. 10*

⁹ Poem 60, often viewed as a scrap of an unfinished work or as a fragment rather than a complete poem, takes a similar tack, mixing the iambic and erotic with epic-tragic elements, but is more straightforwardly abusive than poem 8. Generic parody is particularly characteristic of Hipponax, and Athenaeus *Deipnosophistae* 698b identifies him as the inventor of the genre, citing fr. 128W.

*puella nam mi, quae meo sinu fugit,
 amata tantum quantum amabitur nulla,
 pro qua mihi sunt magna bella pugnata,
 consedit istic. hanc boni beatique
 omnes amatis, et quidem, quod indignum est, 15
 omnes pusilli et semitarii moechi;
 tu praeter omnes, une de capillatis,
 cuniculosae Celtiberiae fili,
 Egnati, opaca quem bonum facit barba
 et dens Hibera defricatus urina. 20*

You regulars of the whore-house tavern,
 nine doors along from the temple of the Capped Brothers,
 do you think that you alone have the pricks,
 that you alone may screw all the girls,
 and that the rest of us are goats? 5
 Or because you creeps sit in a line,
 a hundred or two hundred strong, do you think I wouldn't
 dare
 to stuff the two hundred of you together as you sit?
 If you like, think so: for against you all over
 the tavern front I'm going to scribble cocks. 10
 For the girl who has left my embrace,
 for whom I have fought many wars,
 whom I loved as none shall ever be loved again,
 has settled in there. Her you men of rank and fortune
 all love—indeed, what's a shame, 15
 all you petty lechers and backstreet adulterers;
 you beyond all, lone one of the long-hairs,
 son of rabbity Celtiberia,
 Egnatius, whom a bushy beard makes a gentleman,
 and teeth brushed with Spanish piss. 20

Catullus 37

Throughout poem 37 and the other choliambic poems in which invective features,
 Catullus often makes use of whole-line insults, where the beginning and end of a line or
 successive lines correspond in some way. Substitutions in the choliambic line are much
 freer than in the iambic trimeter poems, and therefore it could be argued less distinctive.
 However, Catullus occasionally uses substitutions to connect identically scanned phrases

from line to line, often set off by caesurae; he also very sparingly resolves a long syllable into two short syllables, an occurrence rare enough that it is never meaningless. Finally, and most importantly, Catullus uses the final, “limping” metron of the line to designate the specific targets of his abuse, or for other words contextually related to this abuse. These metrical effects are crucial to a full understanding of Catullus’ choliambos, and in poem 37, they confirm Lesbia as a target equal in standing to the *taberna* and its denizens.¹⁰

In poem 37, there is a smooth constancy between the beginning and end of the first line; both the *salax taberna* and the *contubernales* within it are Catullus’ targets. As we will see in poem 22 (pp. 85-99 below), the abusive weight of the final metron can also be used contrastively to remove or diminish abuse at the beginning of the line, but here the abuse is continuous. Though the appearance of the *contubernales* at the end of the first line suggests that they are the main target, in fact the place and its denizens are close associates, since words describing them tend to be bound up with place in some way: *contubernales* are tent-mates, soldiers who share the same space (*contubernium*). More than that, the word *contubernales* echoes the earlier *taberna*, which by itself is enough to indicate that the tavern could also be serving as a brothel.¹¹ Putting *salax* as the first word in the poem explicitly sets the focus on sexual depravity, a common feature in *iambos* even in the earliest iambographers. *Salax* is related to the verb *salire*, “to jump”

¹⁰ Pace Wiseman 1969, p. 40: “[T]he reference to Lesbia is one of sorrow rather than anger ... Catullus never directly attacks Lesbia in the way he attacked the victims ... of his genuine lampoons” (cf. Lateiner 1977, Wiseman 1979, and Skinner 1991).

¹¹ Syndikus 1984, p. 210.

or, more appropriately, “to mount.”¹² The use of *salax* as the first word “suggests that ... [the] comrades are dominated by their sexual appetites,” even though the adjective properly modifies the *taberna* itself rather than the *contubernales*.¹³ Catullus similarly muddies the distinction with his threatened punishment of drawing *sopiones*, which strictly speaking would physically affect only the *frontem tabernae* (l. 10), but (taking *vobis* as a dative of disadvantage, l. 9) also ends up affecting—and denigrating—the *contubernales*. At the end of the second line, *pila* (also a vocative) is a synecdoche for the *taberna*. Thus each category of target, tavern and tavern-dwellers, sits successively in the final metron of the first two lines, the position in the choliambic line most suitable for abuse. This further stresses the equivalence of the targets; an attack on one is easily blurred into an attack on the other.

This equivalence is also stressed by the caesurae in the first two lines of the poem. In choliambics, as in iambic trimeters, a caesura occurs at the word break—which can, but need not, correspond with a sense pause—in the second metron, either in the middle of the 3rd or 4th foot, or both (of these, a 3rd foot break is most common).¹⁴ When 3rd- and 4th-foot caesurae co-occur, it necessarily means that a single two-syllable word is isolated in the middle of the line.¹⁵ A word in the center of the line is always noticeable,

¹² Adams 1982, p. 203.

¹³ If the word *salax* is meant to remind the reader of *sal*, ‘salt’ or ‘wit,’ it stands in contrast not only to the *insulsi* of line 6 (*insulsi* < *salsi* < *sal*), but to the final word in the poem, *urina* (a salty substance), and thus to Egnatius in particular. In poem 37, every instance of ‘salt’ (or as Fordyce 1961, p. 197 puts it, “piquancy;” cf. Krostenko 2001a, pp. 12-13) is ‘wrong’ in some way, and is used to attack Catullus’ targets.

¹⁴ Raven 1965, p. 52; Califf 2002, p. 178; Green 2005, p. 33.

¹⁵ So in the iambic trimeter poem 52: *sella in curuli || struma || Nonius sedet* (“Nonius the tumor sits in the curule chair,” l. 2). The *struma* is seated precisely in the center of the line, and words associated with sitting are at the beginning and end. This is a particularly good example because *struma* can form a sense-

but the caesurae help to mark it out if it is significant.¹⁶ At 37.1, this word is *vosque*, referring to the denizens of the *taberna*; in the following line, this word is *nona*, referring to the location of the *taberna*:

_ _ ∪ _ | ∪ _ _ ∪ _ | ∪ _ _ x
Salax taberna || **vosque** || *contubernales*,
 _ _ ∪ _ | ∪ _ _ ∪ _ | ∪ _ _ x
a pilleatis || **nona** || *fratribus pila*,
 Catullus 37.1-2

In both cases the isolated word is in the vocative, addressing Catullus' first identified targets. When he zeroes in on Egnatius in line 17, the effect is repeated with *une*, also in the vocative.

The *nona ... pila* makes a fitting target for the manner of Catullus' revenge, which will be graffiti (the *sopionibus* of l. 10).¹⁷ In line 3, however, the *contubernales* are given pride (shame?) of place at both beginning and end, in the hyperbaton of *solis ... vobis*. At the beginning of the next line, *solis* is repeated, and the word *puellarum* fills the final metron.¹⁸ Although the phrase *quidquid est puellarum* (l. 4) is generalizing, the placement of *puellarum* suggests that these *puellae* are not "nice girls," but rather the

unit with either side: *sella in curuli struma* ("in the curule seat, a tumor") or *struma Nonius sedet* ("the tumor Nonius sits").

¹⁶ I do not mean to suggest that the caesurae *make* a word significant, merely that they can serve to underscore an already-significant word.

¹⁷ "The *pila* was often used to advertise a shopkeeper's wares" (Quinn 1973 [1970] *ad loc.*). Horace *Satire* 4.71 is another example of this usage, specifically for a bookseller. Brown 1993 *ad loc.* suggests that "books would probably be tied round it, like the wine-bottles alluded to by Martial at 7.61.5," but there could just as easily be drawings or writings painted directly on the *pila*. Cf. Horace *Ars Poetica* 373 and Martial 1.117.10-11, where this is unspecified. Rudd 1989, p. 210, suggests that Martial 1.117 refers to "lists or sheets with names, titles, and publicity 'blurb.'" Howell 1980 *ad loc.* denies that *postis* is synonymous with *pila* or *columna*, which seems reasonable, but does suggest that here the *postes* "are painted with advertisements," and there is no compelling reason why a *pila* or *columna* would not be similarly painted.

¹⁸ The repetition of *solis* stresses that it is truly *only* the ones being addressed here who (would dare or be foolish enough to?) think that they alone have *mentulae* or that they alone get to *confutuere quidquid est puellarum*; Évrard-Gillis 1976: "[R]épéter *solus* ... équivaut à dire: absolument seul La reprise constitue une sorte de tour superlatif," p. 113. No one else would make such a mistake.

type who would hang out in such an establishment as this *salax taberna*: prostitutes. As I demonstrate below, this reference to *puellae* is where Catullus first begins to extend the target to Lesbia.¹⁹

The fifth line begins with a *hapax legomenon* (*confutuere*) and a metrical substitution, a dactyl instead of a spondee or iamb, in the first foot.²⁰ The *con-* prefix strikingly connects the word with the *contubernales*, and deepens the sense of their collective degeneracy—the comrades are all screwing in the tavern together, as one might expect in a brothel. Putting *confutuere* at the beginning of the line adds to the word’s vigor, as does the striking resolution and the elision with *et*:

_ ˘˘˘ _ | ˘ _ ˘ _ | ˘ _ _ x
confutuere et putare ceteros hircos?
 Catullus 37.5

These elements make it seem as if Catullus is spitting and slurring the first metron out in disgust.²¹ The word *hircos* (an abusive word associated elsewhere in Catullus with the

¹⁹ There is also a stress accent on the root *-fūt-*. As tavern-dwellers themselves, these *puellae* also become targets associated with the *taberna*. Some commentators have been tempted to suggest that the *taberna* is Lesbia’s house (Kroll 1968 [1923] *ad loc.*; Quinn 1973 [1970], p. 203; and Krostenko 2001b, p. 265. Cf. Schmidt 1887, p. xxi, who suggests that the *taberna* is owned by Clodius Pulcher; and Frank 1928, pp. 26–27, who suggests that the *taberna* is Caelius’ house). That Catullus has Lesbia in mind at any rate seems likely; 37.12 and 8.15 are all but equivalent, and poem 8 shares distinctive solar imagery with poem 5, where Lesbia is named.

²⁰ This resolution causes consternation to Trappes-Lomax (2007), who argues for the deletion of the entire line as a “standard explanatory interpolation” of the previous line (p. 104), following Hand 1809 and citing Horace *Epode* 12.15; Martial 3.32.1–4; 3.76.4; and Theocritus 1.105. I disagree, since there is no reason for Catullus to mince words by eliding the concept of *futuere*, leaving *solis licere*, *quidquid est puellarum* (“[you think] that whatever girls exist are allowed to you alone,” l. 4), or, alternately, for an interpolator to make up an entirely new word.

²¹ On the prefix *con-*: Quinn 1973 [1970]: “the preverb ... stresses that the job is done properly;” Thomson 1997 [1978]: “[it] contains the notion of doing something on a large scale, ‘in a big way,’ ‘wholesale.’” Neither of these suggestions however can possibly override the sense that *con-* is connected with *contubernales*, implying collective action.

foul-smelling Rufus)²² is interesting in that it is an insult from the point of view of the *contubernales* given pride of place at choliambic line end.

Returning to the brothel connection, the last two words of line 6 are *sedetis insulsi*. Herescu has pointed out that *sedere* has an erotic sense, activated by *salax taberna* in line 1 and confirmed at the end of line 8, when the sexual threat and echo of *sedere* occur (*irrumare sessores*):²³

_ _ ∪ _ | _ _ _ ∪ _ | ∪ _ _ x
an, continenter quod sedetis insulsi
 _ _ _ _ ∪ _ | _ _ _ ∪ _ | _ _ x
centum an ducenti, non putatis ausurum
 _ _ ∪ _ | _ _ _ ∪ _ | _ _ x
me una ducentos irrumare sessores?
 Catullus 37.6-8

The word *insulsi*, at the “limp” of line 6, describes the *contubernales* and attributes to them a lack of *sal*, an important quality in Catullan poetics (and thus an appropriate insult).²⁴ Line 7 is unusual, as it is lacking an insult or target for an insult (though it does include a form of *putare*; see pp. 80-81 below).²⁵ Instead, Catullus stresses his own boldness in the final three long syllables with *ausurum*. The obscene nature of what he

²² Rufus is not named in poem 71 (where *hircus* appears), but is usually assumed to be the target based on parallels with poem 69 (which uses the word *caper* instead).

²³ Herescu 1959, p. 132f., n. 2, and Herescu 1960, pp. 433ff. Cf. also Lenchantin de Gubernatis 1932 *ad loc.* and Adams 1982, p. 165.

²⁴ See Fordyce 1961, p. 197; and Krostenko 2001a, pp. 12-13. As I suggest above (p. 70, n. 13), this may be part of a pun on *sal/salax*.

²⁵ Line 7 begins with *centum an ducenti*; the elision of *an*, the word distinguishing between the two numbers, into *centum*, suggests that here the number does not matter (Ellis 1889 [1876], p. 132: *an* “is particularly used where there is a doubt as to the exact number”). This is distinct from the next line, beginning *me una ducentos* (“that I, all at once, two hundred”). I reject the emendation *me unum ducentos* (“that I, one man, two hundred”) suggested by Pleitner 1876, p. 113 and followed by Trappes-Lomax 2007, p. 104. The former better suits the nature of the punishment, since graffiti on the *taberna* does actually act to punish everyone there at the same time; the emendation would perhaps stress the numerical contrast between Catullus and the *contubernales* more, although *una* seems enough in itself to hint at that contrast without sacrificing better sense.

will dare, like the erotic sense of *sedere*, is taken from the end of the next line (*irrumare sessores*), so *ausurum* picks up an association with abuse from context; like *hircos*, it bends but does not break the pattern of using the final metron for abuse. Here, the *sessores* are the *contubernales*. Ellis surely has the right idea here: Catullus is threatening to deal with the tavern-dwellers with irrumation, as if *they* are prostitutes, equivalent to the *puellarum* of line 4.²⁶ The word *sedere* can be used of a prostitute setting up shop.²⁷ The words *sedetis* and *sessores* also tie denizens to place, further mingling the human targets with the target location.

In line 10, Catullus stresses his means of attack, *scribam*.²⁸ *Scribam* here reveals what it is that Catullus is truly going to dare (*ausurum*, l. 7). Again, Catullus uses the end of his choliambic line for a verbal form tangentially related to obscene punishment, the means of abuse rather than the object(s) of abuse. Line 10's *frontem tabernae sopionibus scribam* answers line 3's *solis putatis esse mentulas vobis* in kind: "You think **pricks** are **yours** alone? **I will inscribe** the front of the tavern with **penises**." Catullus disabuses his targets (*vobis*) of their notions about their tools (*mentulas*), then he himself (*scribam*) abuses them with his own (*sopionibus*). Though clearly writing is also involved in creating graffiti, the threat *purports* to be different from the actual means of attack: poem 37 itself.

²⁶ Ellis 1889 [1876], pp. 132-133. Herescu's translation captures the sense: "Peut-être, parce que vous êtes là une brochette de cent ou deux cents fadas à vous prostituer, ne croyez-vous pas que j'oserai, moi, le mettre en bouche simultanément à deux cent prostitués? Que si, croyez-le bien!" (Herescu 1960, p. 434).

²⁷ Herescu 1959 *passim*. Catullus is also playing with the image of a military encampment conjured up by *contubernales* in l. 1; *sedere* can also mean "to encamp" (cf. e.g. Naevius 6.2, Plautus *Amphitruo* 2.1.52, and Varro *Rerum Rusticarum* 1.2.2.); cf. Johnson 1999 and Wray 2001, pp. 84-87.

²⁸ Cf. Richlin 1992 [1983], p. 150.

The next few lines refer to Lesbia, and Lateiner argues that this is the only section of the poem lacking an insult:²⁹

*puella nam mi, quae meo sinu fugit,
amata tantum quantum amabitur nulla,
pro qua mihi sunt magna bella pugnata,
consedit istic.*

Catullus 37.11-14

This is inaccurate—though it is true that Catullus *seems* to be deliberately minimizing insults in lines 11-13. *Puella*, *amata* and *pro qua*, substantives signifying Lesbia, are all at the beginning of the line, as far as possible from the negative associations of the choliambic line-end (a strategy Catullus will use in poem 22; see pp. 85-99 below). This reading is also suggested by the fact that the sequence begins at the center of the poem, often used by Catullus as a place to reassess his strategy or to change direction.³⁰ The intersection of iambic and erotic looks as though it will undercut Catullus' abusive power, and it is no coincidence that the middle line of this odd grouping (37.12) is almost identical to 8.5; poem 8 is also in choliambics and also depicts a struggle between the iambic and the erotic.³¹ In line 11, it seems to be the mere fact that Lesbia flees him that causes Catullus the most consternation, and thus *meo sinu fugit* is at the end of the line. However, *sinus* can have sexual connotations ("The girl ... flees from my **embrace**").³² *Puella* is a reminder to the reader of the unpleasant associations accrued by *puellarum* in line 4, particularly by its placement at choliambic line-end. Confirmation of abuse,

²⁹ Lateiner 1977, p. 27: "Like all rejected lovers, Catullus lays the blame on his amatory rivals and not on the woman." He sees no insult in line 14, either (*contra* Herescu 1960).

³⁰ For example, poem 5 begins an accounting of kisses at line 7 (of 13), and poem 36 launches into a parodic prayer at line 11 (of 20).

³¹ See pp. 111-122 below. Catullus' hendecasyllables often tap into this same tension; see Chapter Three (pp. 137-183).

³² Adams 1982, pp. 90-91.

consedit istic, is delayed until the beginning of line 14.³³ As for line 13, the military language of *magna bella pugnata* connects it with line 1's *contubernales* ("tentmates"). So Marguerite Johnson: "Catullus exploits the games inherent in his choice of words ... Lesbia is the epitome of whoredom, and the *contubernales*" who, like prostitutes, are *sessores*, "follow her to learn *ars amatoria*, not *ars militaria*."³⁴ In poem 8, the primacy of iambic over erotic is uncertain; in poem 37, what seems like an erotic derailment of invective reveals itself as a momentary shift in invective strategy.³⁵ Despite the lack of particular invective words, the overall message of lines 11-14 is wholly abusive: Lesbia is a prostitute.

The erotic strategy continues through the end of line 15, to throw into doubt the links between *puellarum* and *puella*, *contubernales* and *magna bella pugnata*, *sessores* and *consedit*. The persistence of a mild tone after the revelation of Lesbia's prostitution (*consedit istic*, l. 14) appears to undercut its bite. The *contubernales* are incongruously described as *boni beatique* at the end of line 14;³⁶ this is followed by the fussy (rather than abusive) *quod indignum est* in the final metron of line 15, "weak stuff for a Catullan invective."³⁷ This is much the same delaying tactic that Catullus uses in lines 11-14; he returns to full invective in line 16. The structure seems to dictate that the next line should have another verb, describing what it is that is *indignum*, but instead we have a different

³³ See Skinner 1991, pp. 6-7 for the connection between *consedit* and prostitution.

³⁴ Johnson 1999, p. 88.

³⁵ Skinner 2003, p. 159, takes poem 37 to be "a blunt answer" to the questions of poem 8 ("whom will you kiss?" etc.); cf. Thomas 1985, pp. 185-189.

³⁶ The *-que* of *beatique* helps in linking *boni* not only to *beati*, but to the final metron, as does the fact that it appears to be a set phrase (cf. Cicero *Pro Sestio* 98; for adverbial examples see Krostenko 2001b, p. 263, n. 109). Thus *boni* shares in the associations of the final limping metron without actually being in that metron.

³⁷ Wiseman 1969, p. 40.

descriptor of the subjects: *omnes pusilli et semitarii moechi*. This connects to *boni beatique* with the repetition of *omnes* at the beginning of lines 15 and 16, stressing that they are one and the same.³⁸

_ _ _ | _ _ _ x
 ... hanc boni beatique
 _ _ _ | _ _ _ | _ _ _ x
omnes amatis, et quidem, quod indignum est,
 _ _ _ | _ _ _ | _ _ _ x
omnes pusilli et semitarii moechi;
 Catullus 37.14-16

Line 16, an entire-line insult culminating in *moechi*, necessitates a negative reading of the repeated word *omnes* in the preceding and following line. Krostenko argues that *pusilli* and *semitarii* (the latter the second *hapax legomenon* in the poem) are meant to suggest, respectively, “not ‘real’ *moechi*, but as it were half-assed *moechi*, ... if the proper *moechus* had the nerve to visit a *matrona* at home” as opposed to a *taberna*, and “denizens of the backstreets, the locale to which Catullus assigns tawdry sex.”³⁹ With Lesbia, *moechari* is hardly difficult, especially if it is her house set up as a *salax taberna*.⁴⁰ If *omnes ... moechi* are so clearly terrible, then *boni beatique / omnes* is clearly sarcastic, as befits its placement in the line. *Quod indignum est* (l. 15) is not a gentle rebuke for the “good and the fortunate,” as it first appears. What is truly *indignum* is that the *boni beatique* and *semitarii moechi* are one and the same.⁴¹

³⁸ That they are both *precisely* the same group of people seems clear, *pace* Johnson 1999, p. 87, who argues instead that the *boni beatique*, the *semitarii moechi*, and Egnatius all together form “the complete tripartite gang of *contubernales*.” Cf. Krostenko 2001b, p. 264-265; and Nappa 2001, p. 69.

³⁹ Krostenko 2001b, p. 262, esp. n. 104.

⁴⁰ Krostenko 2001b, p. 265, n. 117.

⁴¹ Krostenko 2001b, pp. 265-265, convincingly argues that the *boni beatique* and the *moechi* are the same people. This reading is bolstered by the “extending *quidem*” (Solodow 1978, p. 110) of line 15, which suggests that what follows is in addition to but fundamentally different from what precedes it.

In line 17, Catullus changes the focus of his attention suddenly:

– – ∪ – | – || ...
tu praeter omnes, ...

Catullus 37.17

This *tu*, who will be identified at the beginning of line 19 as Egnatius (Catullus often puts words identifying the same person or persons in the same part of different lines), is presented as contrasting with and different to *omnes*—despite Egnatius’ presence among *omnes*, he is not one of them. The group of *capillati* (“long-hairs”) takes up the final metron of line 17. Are these the *sessores* or the Celtiberians, who “wore their hair and beard thick and long?”⁴² The latter seems not quite right on two grounds. The structure of the line on either side of the caesura is parallel:

A₁ B₁ C₁ || A₂ B₂ C₂
tu praeter omnes, une de capillatis,
 Catullus 37.17

Tu corresponds with *une*, *omnes* with *capillatis*, and the prepositions in both cases effectively distinguish the individual from the group he supposedly belongs to (“you more than all, the lone one from the long-hairs”). *Capillatis*, which “suggest[s] softness, both by sense and by sound,”⁴³ and therefore effeminacy, also reprises the sounds of line 2, *pilleatis ... pila*; as the *pila* (= *taberna*) has already been muddled with the *contuberna*les/*sessores*, it seems likely that this is the group referred to by *capillatis* (similar to *omnes* of l. 17 as a direct repetition of the *omnes* of lines 15 and 16). Their softness (*mollitia*, commonly considered contemptuous by the Romans, and a sign of sexual passivity) has in any event already been demonstrated by Catullus’ *sopiones* (l.

⁴² Ellis 1889 [1876], p. 135.

⁴³ Thomson 1997 [1978], p. 302.

10). Egnatius does not fit in with the group, and is singled out for more personalized abuse.

The following line (*cuniculosae Celtiberiae fili*) ends with another vocative, which according to Thomson, “when it is added to the name of a country, is contemptuous,” thus making it appropriate for that part of the choliambic line.⁴⁴ Ross suggests instead that it is meant to mock heroic language.⁴⁵ Whichever view is correct, the unusual three-word line zeroes in on Egnatius as both foreign and soft (according to Krostenko, the *wrong* kind of soft).⁴⁶ *Cuniculosae* works well as a descriptor of *Celtiberiae*; Celtiberia was known for its rabbits, and *cuniculosae* suggests softness (and may hint at further obscenities).⁴⁷ This connection is aided by the imagery at 25.1:

Cinaede Thalle, mollior cuniculi capillo (“*cinaedus* Thallus, softer than a rabbit’s fur”).

Egnatius’ name is revealed at the beginning of line 19.⁴⁸ In the line’s final position, his dark beard, the *barba*, actually makes (*facit*) him out to be *bonus*. Corbeill

⁴⁴ Thomson 1997 [1978] *ad loc.*

⁴⁵ Ross 1969, pp. 98-99.

⁴⁶ Krostenko 2001b, p. 268, suggests that Egnatius fits into neither of the “two Roman views of stylish behavior,” the *boni beatique* (aristocratic and Roman) and the other *capillati* (the stylish and soft). Egnatius’ softness “is attributed not to his understanding of the semiotics of contemporary Roman culture but to his origins in Celtiberia, the land of soft bunnies.”

⁴⁷ Thomson 1997 [1978] *ad loc.* The word may also be punning on the obscenities *culus* and *cunnus*: see Lateiner 1977, p. 31, n. 38; and Dettmer 1997, p. 75. If so, it may foreshadow the *os impurum* revealed by the final line (see Richlin 1992 [1983], pp. 150-151), but taking the word this way requires a change in meter (*culus* and *cunnus* begin with long syllables, whereas their equivalents in *cuniculosae* are short syllables).

⁴⁸ Thomson 1997 [1978], pp. 304-305; and Wiseman 1987, p. 340, discuss possible identifications of Egnatius. Most interesting is an Egnatius who wrote a *De Rerum Natura*; though only two fragments (just over three lines) survive, he does elide the final –s (as does Lucretius), a practice which is avoided by the *poetae novi*, according to Cicero *Orator* 160. For the fragments of this Egnatius see Courtney 1993, pp. 147-148; and Hollis 2007, pp. 87-89. On the Cicero passage, see Hollis 2007, pp. 1-2, with further references.

identifies this sort of thing as “physical hypocrisy.”⁴⁹ Egnatius’ appearance makes him seem as if he actually belongs to the group at the *taberna*, when in fact Catullus has kept him distinct (l. 17).⁵⁰ The beard also serves to offset Egnatius’ teeth. It is the final word in the final line, *urina*, that shows Egnatius’ most disgusting quality, that he scrubs his teeth with Iberian urine (*Hibera ... urina*). It’s not just that he is engaging in the Iberian custom, as Thomson suggests, but that he is actually using Iberian urine.⁵¹ As the *cuniculosae Celtiberiae fili[us]*, that urine’s most likely source is Egnatius himself.⁵²

As I have shown, the choliambic structure lends itself to emphasis at the beginning and end of the line (true for all stichic meters to some degree), though the limping final metron carries special weight; it can also emphasize a two-syllable word in the center of the line. Avoidance of these parts of the line can result in a studied lack of emphasis. Returning to line 5, the phrase *putare ceteros hircos* (“to think the rest [are] goats”) has caused confusion, especially due to the chain of dependencies: *putare* is dependent on the *licere* of the previous line, which itself is dependent on *putatis* of line 3. For Trappes-Lomax, this is “incompetent writing” and a reason to delete the line.⁵³ However, removing the line would disrupt the polyptoton of *putare* that occurs at every

⁴⁹ Corbeill 1996, pp. 169-173, discusses Piso’s appearance, which according to Cicero “*belies* his true, morally repugnant nature.” He mentions Egnatius (p. 170) as a similar example.

⁵⁰ It is not clear until the contemptuous *fili* at the end of line 18 that Egnatius is also a distinct target of Catullus, rather than a lone exception to the group of targets.

⁵¹ Thomson 1997 [1978] *ad loc.*: “*Hibera ...* really stands for *sicut apud Hiberos mos est*.” It may be the custom there, and that’s certainly part of why the insult works, but all the same it is not what Catullus actually says.

⁵² Additionally, if we do accept that *cuniculosae* is punning on *cunnus* and *culus*, added to Egnatius’ own urine we have a trifecta of oral-genital and oral-anal contact, at least by implication; see Richlin 1992 [1983], p. 150.

⁵³ Trappes-Lomax 2007, p. 104.

other line between lines 3 and 9 (*putatis ... putare ... putatis ... putate*).⁵⁴ This regularity is without doubt deliberate (and thus also argues against the reading *putere*).⁵⁵ So Quinn: “it is clear from 7 *putatis* and 9 *putate* that the point is being made by repetition that the *contubernales* thought a lot of their own opinion.”⁵⁶ It is equally clear that Catullus cares little for what the *contubernales* think. Their opinions are (un)marked by a metrical de-emphasis; the various forms of *putare* are never placed in an emphatic part of the line.

In the choliambics Catullus uses word placement at the beginning or middle of the line for emphasis, but the final metron is the standout feature of the meter’s structure. In poem 37, Catullus most often uses the halting final metron of the choliambic line primarily to draw attention to and connections between his targets or their practices that are worthy of contempt (*contubernales*, l. 1; *pila*, l. 2; *vobis*, l. 3; *puellarum*, l. 4; *insulsi*, l. 6; *sessores*, l. 8; *vobis*, l. 9; *pugnata*, l. 13; *moechi*, l. 16; *fili*, l. 18). He varies this strategy with words associated with abuse only through context, using irony (*boni beatique*, l. 14; *indignum est*, l. 15), his targets’ insult (*hircos*, l. 5), his own means of attacking the targets (*ausurum*, l. 7; *scribam*, l. 10), or physical attributes which in other choliambic poems, as Morgan and Barchiesi have noticed, carry connotations of lameness befitting the limping iambic meter, but here are more generally physical flaws

⁵⁴ I take polyptoton not in the narrow sense of ‘Herodian’ *On Figures* 40 in Hajdú 1998 (= 8.598 Walz 1832-6 and 3.97 Spengel 1856 [1853]), which is limited to nouns and pronouns (πολύπτωτον δέ, ὅταν ᾗτοι τὰς ἀντονομασίας ἢ τὰ ὀνόματα εἰς πάσας τὰς πτώσεις μεταβάλλοντες διατιθώμεθα τὸν λόγον, “It is polyptoton when we arrange a speech by changing pronouns or nouns according to all the cases”) as found in e.g. Archilochus 115W, but rather in the more general sense as in the *ODLT* sv. *polyptoton*: “a partial repetition ... from the use in close proximity of two related words having different forms.”

⁵⁵ For *putere* see primarily Herescu 1960, but see also the comments of Quinn 1973 [1970] and Heyworth 2008, as well as the text of Lee 1990.

⁵⁶ Quinn 1973 [1970] *ad loc.*

that reveal the character of the targets (*capillatis*, l. 17; *barba*, l. 19; *urina*, l. 20).⁵⁷

Catullus uses the final metron to dynamically link rhythm and invective content, and once the link is established, he plays with the conceit, as when he keeps *putare* away from emphatic line positions or inserts an entire line from another poem (8.5 = 37.12), the effects of which ripple outwards so that the surrounding lines take on a sheen of innocence even as context confirms their content as abusive. As I demonstrate below, Catullus applies the same techniques and tensions to the diagnostic choliamb.

Hipponactean Invective and Callimachean Criticism

On the face of it, Catullus' use of the choliamb for diagnosis breaks with the iambic tradition's portrayal of Hipponax. For Hellenistic and later writers, Hipponax represented invective in the same vein as Archilochus, *only more so*, and that extends to his characteristic meter: "of all the stichic metres used by the old Iambicists (trimeters, tetrameters, choliamb), only the last retains its true Iambic ring."⁵⁸ In theory, choliamb, associated with Hipponax, should really be much harsher than typical iambic trimeters, associated with Archilochus, since the latter are also used outside the confines of *iambos*. Archilochus was considered the prototypical blame poet, as is clear from the biographical

⁵⁷ Morgan 2010b, p. 126 (and n. 43) provides an example from Callimachus (noticed by Barchiesi): "Callimachus' placement of a word of locomotion, ἦκω, 'I come', in the first 'limp' of his *Iambi* at 1.1 ... evokes the halting gait of the speaker Hipponax in an entirely non-verbal way." He also acknowledges (2010a, p. 163) that this kind of play is generally much more pronounced and "self-conscious" in Latin poetry than in Greek.

⁵⁸ Kerkhecker 1999, p. 6.

tradition surrounding him.⁵⁹ When Archilochus' tradition is set beside Hipponax's, this becomes particularly stark: the story that Archilochus drove his enemies, Lycambes and his daughters, to suicide because of the vehemence of his poetry has an analogue in the story of the supposed suicide of the sculptors Bupalus and Athenis after being attacked by Hipponax.⁶⁰ The latter tale was almost as popular as the Lycambid story despite the fact that even in the ancient world it was considered demonstrably false.⁶¹ The importance of Archilochus to the genre *iambos* ensures that later practitioners have access to abusive poetry's unrelenting anger and potential lethality. Acosta-Hughes sums up "the generic features that characterize Archilochus as an iambic poet" as "also present in Hipponax ... carried to greater extremes: (1) a poetic voice that is invective, didactic, or critical, and (2) language and imagery that evokes the petty, the low, even the sordid."⁶² A poetic epitaph for Hipponax by Philippus of Thessaloniki in the Palatine Anthology (though it is from the century after Catullus) neatly sums up the Hellenistic view of both Hipponax and of the choliambic meter:

ὦ ξεῖνε, φεῦγε τὸν χαλαζεπῆ τάφον
τὸν φρικτὸν Ἰππώνακτος, οὗ τε χά τέφρα
ιαμβιάζει Βουπάλειον ἐς στύγος,
μή πως ἐγείρης σφῆκα τὸν κοιμώμενον,
ὃς οὐδ' ἐν Ἄιδῃ νῦν κεκοίμηκεν χόλον,
σκάζουσι μέτροις ὀρθὰ τοξεύσας ἔπη.

⁵⁹ See especially West 1974, pp. 25ff.; Rotstein 2007; and Rotstein 2010, pp. 281-318. I discount Thersites, the possible Homeric depiction of a blame poet, for whom see Nagy 1999 [1979]; Parks 1990; Rosen 2003; Marks 2005; Rosen 2007; and Halliwell 2008.

⁶⁰ The poetic initiation which appears in the Mnesiepes inscription (Archilochus T3 in Gerber 1999, pp. 16-25) may have its own double in the story that Hipponax met Iambe, who spoke to him in either an iambic trimeter or a choliamb: ἄνθρωπ', ἄπελθε, τὴν σκάφην ἀνατρέπεις / ἀνατρέψεις ("Sir, be gone, you are upsetting / will upset the trough") (Hipponax 183 in Gerber 1999, pp. 496-499, trans. Gerber). See Brown 1988 and Rosen 1988 on this possibility.

⁶¹ Pliny *Natural History* 36.4.11-12 uses a statue's base as evidence that Bupalus and Athenis were not driven to suicide by Hipponax.

⁶² Acosta-Hughes 2002, p. 2.

Stranger, flee from the grave with its hailstorm of verses, the frightful grave of Hipponax, whose very ashes utter invective to vent his hatred of Bupalus, lest somehow you arouse the sleeping wasp who has not even now in Hades put to sleep his anger, he who shot forth his words straight to the mark in limping meter.

Philippus of Thessaloniki *AP* 7.405⁶³

The corpus as it stands still reflects this view of Hipponax as a “more iambic”

Archilochus. Of surviving fragments, about a tenth of Archilochus is unquestionably invective, as opposed to about two of every nine fragments of Hipponax. It is possible that this is merely a trick of survival, but it is more likely that the idea of *iambos* as invective had started to take hold, so that Archilochus’ reputation influenced Hipponax’s composition.

When Catullus uses choliambics for diagnosis instead of for direct abuse, he is actually taking up two less-celebrated features of Hipponax’s poetry: artistic criticism and medical complaint. For the former, Catullus is also engaging with the recasting of Hipponax as a dispenser of criticism in Callimachus’ *Iamboi*. The attacks on the sculptors Bupalus and Athenis are supposedly provoked by an unflattering artistic depiction of Hipponax.⁶⁴ Along these lines, Acosta-Hughes argues that Callimachus’ portrait of Hipponax probably stems from Hipponax’s attacks on artists, as against Mimnes, who paints serpents facing the wrong way on ships (fr. 28W).⁶⁵ Catullus does not criticize visual arts in his choliambics, but does engage in literary criticism; as I argued earlier (p. 63 above) this is subordinated to a diagnostic function for solving a problem

⁶³ Text and translation from Gerber 1999, pp. 348-349 (= Hipponax T8). Leonidas of Tarentum (*PA* 7.408 = Hipponax T9), from the 3rd C BCE, also uses the image of a wasp to describe Hipponax, describing his verses as πεπυρωμένα (“fiery”).

⁶⁴ Cf. Pliny *Natural History* 36.4.12 (= Hipponax T4 in Gerber 1999, pp. 344-345).

⁶⁵ Acosta-Hughes 2002, pp. 32-35.

(e.g., why Catullus has come down with a cold in poem 44, or how to categorize stylish Suffenus when his poetry is so rustic in poem 22). Hipponax also betrays a preoccupation with medical or pseudo-medical complaints, especially those involving the cold (frr. 34 and 59W) or the *pharmakos* (scapegoat) tradition (frr. 5-10, 104, and 128W; cf. 92W, which may depict a magical cure for impotence).⁶⁶ He also may be dispensing medical advice for a stomach ache at fr. 118W, for which there seem to be intertextual connections with Callimachus *Iambos* 5.⁶⁷ There are clear parallels with Catullus' similar interest in curatives in poems 44 and 8. Below, I offer close readings of poems 22 and 44 as primarily literary-critical diagnoses, poem 8 as an erotic self-diagnosis where the choliamb is used to combat lovesickness, and finally poem 31, which, though it portrays Sirmio as a curative for Catullus' time in Bithynia, is linked closely to the iambic trimeter poem 4.

Catullus 22: Substanceless Suffenus

*Suffenus iste, Vare, quem probe nosti,
homo est venustus et dicax et urbanus,
idemque longe plurimos facit versus.
puto esse ego illi milia aut decem aut plura
perscripta, nec sic ut fit in palimpsesto* 5
*relata: cartae regiae novi libri,
novi umbilici, lora rubra, membranae,
derecta plumbo et pumice omnia aequata.
haec cum legas, tum bellus ille et urbanus
Suffenus unus caprimulgus aut fossor* 10
rursus videtur: tantum abhorret ac mutat.

⁶⁶ At any rate, the cure is graphic and embarrassing. It is worth noting that Catullus, like the Archaic iambographers before him (particularly Hipponax), does not shy away from self-implication, putting himself in a bad light in the course of his diagnoses. This self-criticism ranges from the apparently genuine (as with the lovesickness in poem 8) to the tongue-in-cheek (as with the fable at the end of poem 22).

⁶⁷ See the discussion of Acosta-Hughes, pp. 252-254, esp. n. 96, with further references.

*hoc quid putemus esse? qui modo scurra
 aut siquid hac re scitius videbatur,
 idem inficeto est inficetior rure,
 simul poemata attigit, neque idem umquam 15
 aequae est beatus ac poema cum scribit:
 tam gaudet in se tamque se ipse miratur.
 nimirum idem omnes fallimur, neque est quisquam
 quem non in aliqua re videre Suffenum
 possis. suus cuique attributus est error; 20
 sed non videmus manticae quod in tergo est.*

That Suffenus, Varus, whom you know very well,
 is a charming fellow, and has wit and good manners.
 He also makes many more verses than any one else.
 I suppose he has got some ten thousand or even more
 written out in full, and not put down on used sheets, 5
 as is often done; imperial paper, new rolls,
 new bosses, red ties, parchment wrappers;
 all ruled with lead and smoothed with pumice.
 When you come to read these, the fashionable and well-
 bred
 Suffenus is nothing but any goatherd or ditchdigger 10
 instead (so he seems): so unlike himself and changed he is.
 How are we to account for this? The same man who was
 just now a dinner-table wit
 or someone (if such there be) even smarter (so he seemed),
 is more clumsy than the clumsy country
 whenever he touches poetry; and at the same time he is
 never 15
 so happy as when he is writing a poem,
 he delights in himself and admires himself so much.
 True enough, we are all under the same delusion, and
 there is no one
 whom you may not see to be in one thing or another a
 Suffenus.
 Everybody has his own delusion assigned to him: 20
 but we do not see that part of the bag which hangs on our
 back.

Catullus 22⁶⁸

⁶⁸ Text from Thomson 1997 [1978], except l. 6 *novi* instead of *novae* and l. 9 *legas, tum bellus* instead of *legas tu, bellus* (with Goold 1989 [1983]; and Trappes-Lomax 2007). Cf. Fordyce 1961 and Thomson 1997 [1978] *ad loc.*

In poem 22, Catullus repeatedly uses the choliambic line-end negatively in order to call attention to the awkwardness of Suffenus' poetry. This would seem to be a natural extension of the theory put forth by Demetrius; unrhythmicality seems as suited for awkwardness as for abuse.⁶⁹ Even though Catullus appears at first to praise Suffenus, he eventually undercuts this positive portrait, cueing his audience to expect abuse. For Catullus to begin by describing Suffenus' positive personal attributes (ll. 1-2) in choliambic is completely unexpected, but the poem soon moves in a more critical direction, underscoring Catullus' opinion of Suffenus' poetry by mockingly imitating its awkwardness (ll. 3-8). Where we expect this more direct criticism (ll. 9-17) to culminate in full-fledged abuse, Catullus withdraws into a generalizing fable (ll. 18-21) that appears to indict himself as well; nevertheless, the metrical substructure and its interplay with syntax continues to mock Suffenus even as the narrative retreats from abuse, particularly in the contrast between the contents of the metrically flexible beginning and rigid end of the line.

In its content poem 22 is about the mismatch between a man and his poetry. In life, Suffenus is a *homo ... venustus et dicax et urbanus* ("a man ... deft and snappy and cosmopolitan," l. 2), *bellus ... et urbanus* ("stylish ... and cosmopolitan," l. 9), and a *scurra* ("a wag," i.e. a habitual joker, l. 12).⁷⁰ His poems, however, make their author appear to be *unus caprimulgus aut fossor* ("any old goat-milker or ditchdigger," l. 10) and *inficeto ... inficetior rure* ("less witty than the witless country," l. 14).⁷¹ The words

⁶⁹ Demetrius *On Style* 301 (= Hipponax T12).

⁷⁰ See Krostenko 2001a and 2007 for Catullan social keywords. On the force of *scurra*, see Sandy 1978, pp. 73ff.; and Corbett 1986.

⁷¹ For the force of *unus* at l. 10, see Fordyce 1961 *ad loc.*

Catullus chooses for his description of Suffenus' urbanity and ready wit in verbal speech seems to reveal the opposing force (but see below) of the words describing Suffenus' poetry, which is both rough (with words not carefully chosen) and lengthy (*longe plurimos facit versus*, "he makes very many verses at length," l. 3). Where Suffenus the man is urbane, knowing what to say to entertain his audience, his poetry is rambling and rustic.⁷²

Catullus regularly positions words referring to Suffenus *as a person* in the first metron, in an echo of the effect of line 1, which starts with *Suffenus: homo est* (l. 2), *idemque* (3), *Suffenus* (10), and *idem* (14). This makes sense, since Suffenus *himself* is not awkward, and it keeps Suffenus the person as far away from line end as possible. Indeed, in the first line, there is no clear indication that the poem is anything but a typical iambic trimeter.⁷³ By the end of the line, though, the truth is revealed to the audience that this is a choliamb, and the expectation of abuse would increase accordingly due to the meter's exclusive use for *iambos*. Yet all that Catullus gives us is mild criticism, specifically targeted at Suffenus' poetry rather than Suffenus himself. Suffenus' verses are awkward, and Catullus gives them the least rhythmical position, where the meter stumbles (starting at the end of line 3):

... | ♪ – – x
... *facit versus*.

Catullus 22.3

⁷² As Watson 1990, p. 14, puts it, "as a man, Suffenus has all the right credentials; as a poet, he has all the wrong ones."

⁷³ Typical only in a general sense; for Catullus alone, a pure iambic line is more typical.

Catullus continues the effect in line 4, shoving nine words into a single line. This is the greatest number of words in any line of poem 22, and to accomplish it Catullus uses five elisions. The words must trip over one another to fit. At the end of the line (in the ‘limping’ position) *plura* appears. The end of the choliamb slows the line, emphasizing the weariness felt when faced with *plura* (“more”) verses after already encountering ten thousand (*milia aut decem*). *Plura* does not simply point to the number of words that came before. It is followed by the first enjambment of the poem; there is “more” to come. Nine words and five elisions is not enough to finish the thought, in a perfect mockery of Suffenus’ poetic output. Catullus emphasizes the surfeit of words in this line and in Suffenus’ poetry by enjambling *perscripta*, meaning “to write out in full” or “to write (words) in full (i.e., not in abbreviated form).”⁷⁴ The prosaic choice *perscripta* calls attention to the artless, superfluous words in the previous line, such as *ego* and *aut*.⁷⁵

The following line (l. 6) begins with another enjambment (*relata*, echoing *perscripta*), and ends with *palimpsesto*.⁷⁶ Palimpsest is a perfect example of what Suffenus’ rough-hewn verses *should* be written on, rough and reused scraps, in the roughest part of the choliambic line, not only because palimpsest is cheap—playing into the popular image of the impoverished poet—but because its use implies revision.⁷⁷

Instead, he writes *novi libri* (filling the final metron of line 7), bad final versions instead

⁷⁴ OLD s.v. *perscribo* 1.a & 4.

⁷⁵ That is, Catullus could conceivably have composed the previous line without *ego* (already implicit in *puto*) and without the first *aut* (“ten thousands or more” rather than “either ten thousands or more”). Neither word is crucial to understanding the meaning.

⁷⁶ The unpoetic *perscripta* and *relata* appear multiple times especially in Cicero’s *In Verrem* (together at II.4.146) in reference to record-keeping; their use in poem 22 may be a pointed reference to the subject of Suffenus’ poetry, presumably an annalistic epic, or at least mock his lack of style.

⁷⁷ Fordyce 1961 *ad loc.* describes it as “used writing material which has been cleaned to take fresh writing.” There is some debate about whether it refers to papyrus or parchment (cf. Thomson 1997 [1978]).

of the drafts that *palimpsesto*, in the same metrical *sedes*, implies.⁷⁸ The list that follows describes at length what Suffenus has chosen to write on instead, a long accounting of materials which mirrors Suffenus' ever-increasing poetic output. It is worth adding that *membranae* is well placed in the final position of line 7, because it is the most excessive material, a total extravagance.⁷⁹ Moving from lines 6 to 8, the number of elisions also increases; this causes a tripping effect (similar to that in line 4) in the rush to the final three words:

derecta plumbo.et pumice.omnia.aequata.
Catullus 22.8⁸⁰

Additionally, there is a balancing effect with perfect passive participles at the beginning and end of the line: *derecta* ("ruled-out" or "lined") ... *aequata* ("evened-out" or "made equal").⁸¹ The emphatic position of *aequata* makes it a pointed reference to what *would* be a completely balanced line (participle – adverbial noun – conjunction – adverbial noun – participle) if not for *omnia* and if not for the choliambic meter. *Omnia* here as the subject of the participles refers to the whole book.⁸² Both the poetry to which Catullus is

⁷⁸ Pace Thomson 1997 [1978], who prints *cartae regiae novae libri*, which (p. 260) "gives good sense." He goes on to say that "*novi libri* by itself has little point, since if the sheets are of high quality and not yet written upon, they must, when glued together, automatically make a 'new book.'"

⁷⁹ Thomson 1997 [1978] *ad loc.* Munro 1905 [1878], pp. 52-53, identifies the *membranae* as the wrapper.

⁸⁰ Fitzgerald 1995, pp. 40-41, describes the use of pumice as a depilatory with reference to Catullus 1, giving the book "a teasing sexuality that is provocatively effeminate" (cf. Richlin 1992 [1983], p. 162). The difference here is that Suffenus' poetic *cultus* is wholly cosmetic (*plumbo et pumice*). The 'sexiness' of the book is mismatched with the rusticity of the poetry (for cosmetics and the association of bodily with literary *cultus*, see Wyke 1994, esp. pp. 145ff.).

⁸¹ See Gamberale 1982, pp. 155-156.

⁸² Quinn 1973 [1970] and Thomson 1997 [1978] *ad loc.*

referring and the poetry of Catullus' line 8 itself are out of balance (as are Suffenus the man and Suffenus the poet), and the culprit is Suffenus' poetry.⁸³

To this point Catullus has maintained a distinction between poet and poetry, first by keeping nouns designating Suffenus at the beginning of lines (in lines 1-3), then by placing words describing Suffenus' poetic output first at the end of lines 3-4 (where each line betrays itself as a choliamb instead of a trimeter). The torrent of words describing poetry and poetry book spill over line end and fill the poem until the end of line 8.⁸⁴

Starting with lines 9 and 10, muddled word placement at the beginning and end of the choliambic line causes Suffenus and his poetry to become hopelessly entangled.

Haec in the first position in line 9 refers to the *versus*, which had earlier appeared in the awkward, final position.⁸⁵ At the end of the line, *et urbanus* is repeated, echoing line 2, but now the praise sounds a discordant note. The audience is now alert to the pattern of words appearing at the end of the choliambic line, and there is something *off* about Suffenus' cosmopolitan affect.⁸⁶ The echo also prompts a reassessment of line 2: given

⁸³ Trappes-Lomax 2007, pp. 76-77, wrongly excises lines 6-8, but these lines not only fulfill the need for "a positive account of Suffenus's writing or publishing practices ... after *nec sic ut fit in palimpsesto*" (Heyworth 2008), but they also add to Catullus' point about both the length of Suffenus' poetry and the inordinate amount of effort spent on its publication rather than where it would be best spent, in polishing the poetry.

⁸⁴ Better punctuation might be to change the period at the end of 8 to a comma. The list of nominatives has given some commentators pause (Trappes-Lomax 2007, pp. 22-23, n. 1, suggests that "[t]rue parallels are rare or non-existent,"), but perhaps connecting them with *haec cum legas* etc. fits the rush of information better than a full stop. This would result in anacoluthon as nominative changes to accusative, but grammatical incoherence seems not inconsistent with Suffenus' poetic output. Nisbet 1978, p. 96, emends *novi libri* to *novae bibli* in line 6, which could also be taken as a nominative.

⁸⁵ *Haec* refers less to the *versus* than to the list of materials on which they are printed (*omnia*, l. 8), thus accounting for the change in gender; either way, chopping the book up into constituent parts (including the verses) stresses that the *versus* are hardly verses at all, but rather *things*.

⁸⁶ At the end of line 9 and beginning of 10, *et urbanus* / *Suffenus* echoes lines 1 and 2 (*Suffenus* ... *et urbanus*), keeping word position but swapping word order. The repetition of *Suffenus* at the beginning of line 10, echoing as it does the first word in the poem, signals a new start; from now on, in not keeping Suffenus and his poetry separate, Catullus throws into question everything that came before.

urbanus in the final position, did Catullus really mean what he said in his praise of Suffenus as a man? *Dicax* too may not be as positive as it first appears; take Cicero's description of the orator Demosthenes:

E quibus tamen non omnes faceti: Lysias satis et Hyperides, Demades praeter ceteros fertur, Demosthenes minus habetur; quo quidem mihi nihil videtur urbanus sed non tam dicax fuit quam facetus; est autem illud acrioris ingeni, hoc maioris artis.

Not all of them [*sc.* the Athenian orators], however, are humorous. Lysias is adequate and so is Hyperides; Demades is said to have excelled them all, Demosthenes is considered inferior. Yet it seems to me that none is cleverer (*urbanus*) than he; still he is not witty (*dicax*) so much as humorous (*facetus*); the former requires a bolder talent, the latter a greater art.

Cicero *Orator* 90⁸⁷

The word *urbanus*, still putatively a positive, is now used for contrast. *Dicax*, however, becomes precisely the type of word for someone clever but artless, and indeed in his poetry, Suffenus “is more unsophisticated than the unsophisticated country” (*inficeto est inficetior rure* l. 14). This suggests that Suffenus the man and Suffenus the poet are not so different after all: neither is inclined to become *facetus* rather than *dicax* (i.e., to write with studied cleverness), and both man and poetry book are flash without substance.

Line 10 highlights Suffenus' own lack of refinement, culminating in *fossor* in the final position, and constituting the only whole-line invective in the poem actually aimed at Suffenus:

... *bellus ille et urbanus*
Suffenus unus caprimulgus aut fossor
 Catullus 22.9-10

⁸⁷ Text and translation from Hubbell 1952, pp. 370-371.

This first impression of the entire line is immediately denied: the following line asserts that Suffenus only *seems* (*videtur*) a goat-milker or ditchdigger:

rursus videtur: tantum abhorret ac mutat.
Catullus 22.11

By the end of line 10, however, the damage is already done, as the enjambment of *videtur*—delayed until the second word in line 11—calls into question appearance vs. reality: Suffenus himself is tainted by the rusticity of his poetry.

Like *dicax*, the word *scurra* at the end of line 12 is something of a mixed bag. Though it seems somewhat complimentary (*OLD* I: “an elegant, town-bred man; a fine gentleman, gallant, dandy”), it also has a negative connotation (*OLD* II.1: “a city buffoon, droll, jester”); Richlin renders it as “smart-ass toffs” in her translation of Plautus’ *Curculio* (which the *OLD* cites for the more *positive* definition [*Curculio* 2.3.17]).⁸⁸ Thus it adds to the now-tainted representation of Suffenus, as does the active agency of *scribit* at the end of line 16. Suffenus’ poetry had appeared earlier in poem 22 at the awkward, line-end position, but now the *writer* appears there (and sets up line 17, *tam gaudet in se tamque se ipse miratur*, repetitive in word choice, sound, and meaning).⁸⁹

Lines 18-21 are a surprising conclusion to a poem that starts out by praising Suffenus and criticizing his poetry but moves towards the conflation of the two.⁹⁰

*nimirum idem omnes fallimur, neque est quisquam
quem non in aliqua re videre Suffenum*

⁸⁸ Richlin 2005, pp. 77 & 101. For more on the ambiguity inherent in the word *scurra* see Corbett 1986, esp. pp. 65 & 82-83, and Krostenko 2007, pp. 224-225. Sandy 1978 argues that “the term ‘*scurra*’ does not convey outright condemnation. ... The use of ‘*scurra*’ as a synonym for ‘*parasitus*’ does not appear to occur until the time of Horace” (pp. 73-74).

⁸⁹ *Facit* appeared at the beginning of the final metron in l. 3, but the actual “limp,” the break in the trimeter pattern, only happens at *versus*. *Scribit* in l. 16 is in the exact same position.

⁹⁰ The poetic “turn” is not uncommon in Catullus; see e.g. the final stanzas of poems 11 and 51.

*possis. suus cuique attributus est error;
sed non videmus manticae quod in tergo est.*
Catullus 22.18-21

Catullus could have chosen to further strengthen his criticism, but instead he retreats into proverb.

If the invective is dissipated, it suggests that Catullus is operating in a wholly Callimachean iambic mode. Looking through this lens, now that Catullus has diagnosed precisely what is so confusing about Suffenus' status, is he acknowledging common ground between Suffenus and himself (and Varus, for that matter) with the inclusive fable, or is he maintaining a distinction? Is the reader meant to take the fable at face value, letting Suffenus off the hook? I discuss the connections with Callimachus below, but I argue from metrical and lexical markers that Suffenus remains a target, ultimately confirming Watson's reading of Suffenus' rusticity.⁹¹

The "vigorous abuse" with which Demetrius associates the choliamb is noticeably lacking in Catullus 22.⁹² There is a distancing effect in Catullus' criticism of Suffenus; although the language of criticism eventually encompasses the man himself (lines 9-10), the poem begins and ends with a different focus.⁹³ This softening of personal mockery

⁹¹ Watson 1990.

⁹² Demetrius *On Style* 301 (= Hipponax T12 in Gerber 1999), Gerber's translation.

⁹³ Additionally, I argue that Catullus' choice to address Varus and not his target narrows the scope of the appeal to group *mores* that is often a part of iambic strategy (e.g. Hipponax 1W: ὃ Κλαζομένιοι, Βούπαλος κατέκτεινεν ["O Clazomenians, Bupalus has slain ..."]); cf. West 1974, p. 32). This may further weaken the force of the invective, or it may simply serve to create a more exclusive group. Nisbet 1995, p. 411, suggests that Alfenus Varus is not only the Varus being addressed in 22 (with Frank 1920), but is also Suffenus himself (see Feeney 2012, p. 42). I remain unconvinced; why not write for 30.1 *Suffene* rather than *Alfene*, or for 14.19 *Alfenum* rather than *Suffenum*?

may recall Callimachus' 'Hipponax' of *Iambos* 1, who begins by setting aside the "Bupalean battle," but still engages in a literary critique of Euhemerus' works:⁹⁴

γέρων ἀλαζὼν ἄδικα βιβλία ψήχει.

the chattering old man who scratches out his unrighteous books.
Callimachus *Iambos* 1.11⁹⁵

Acosta-Hughes notes that the "'books' ... are 'unrighteous' rather than the author," though obviously ἀλαζὼν ("chattering") can hardly be considered complimentary.⁹⁶ Watson suggests that in Catullus 22, "Callimachean influence is paramount ... [Catullus] renounces the savagery of Hipponactean iambic in favour of an insinuating irony and gentle raillery which make wry acknowledgement of human shortcomings."⁹⁷ Nowhere is this tone more apparent than in the retreat into proverb at the end of the poem.

The retreat to a generalizing moral tale signals that Catullus wants to give the appearance of being puzzled by the contradiction, at least on the surface: *hoc quid putemus esse?* ("what are we to think of this?" l. 12). How do these two Suffenuses coexist? The confusion extends to the meter: what are we to think of a choliambic poem that ends in a fable instead of abuse?

⁹⁴ ... ἦκω / ἐκ τῶν ὄκου βοῦν κολλύβου πιπρήσκουσιν, / φέρων ἱάμβον οὐ μάχην αἰδίδοντα / τὴν Βουπάλειον ("I have come from where they sell an ox for a penny, bearing an *iambos* not singing the Bupalean battle"), Callimachus *Iambos* 1.1-4.

⁹⁵ Text by Kerkhecker 1999, p. 20; translation by Acosta-Hughes 2002, p. 46. *LSJ* sv. ψήχω III. gives the metaphorical meaning "to scribble," but Callimachus may be hinting at meaning II. "to wear away" (citing *AP* 7.225, which describes time wearing away a burial mound). Euhemerus described a stele on the utopian island of Panchaea which proved that Zeus was a mortal deified after death and looked after by Cretan priests. The Cretans also believed that Zeus had been entombed (as described by Callimachus *Hymn to Zeus* 8-9; see Spyridakis 1968).

⁹⁶ Acosta-Hughes 2002, p. 46 relates this to the fact that it is "the *iambus* rather than the iambic poet that does not sing," and takes both statements as hinting at a literary setting where books do the talking rather than authors.

⁹⁷ Watson 1990, p. 27, n. 19.

Fable itself is a connection between Catullus and the Archaic iambographers. Indeed, fable (αἶνος) has a long lineage in iambic poetry. The moral at the end of poem 22 is an Aesopian fable: Babrius' version holds that Prometheus put one wallet containing the faults of others on the front of each man and another on his back containing his own (Phaedrus differs only in his choice of Jupiter as agent).⁹⁸ Archilochus attacks Lycambes with a version of the fable of the fox and the eagle (frr. 172-181W) and also cites the fable of the fox and the monkey (185-187W). Heyworth sees beast-fable as one of the features of the traditional iambic corpus that is omitted by Catullus,⁹⁹ but fable in *iambos* (and indeed in general) is not limited to beasts.¹⁰⁰ Also included are moral tales about humans, and Hipponax and Callimachus take part in this variation on the tradition. Hipponax and Callimachus both tell the story of the Seven Sages (Hipponax 63 & 123W,¹⁰¹ and Callimachus *Iambos* 1.32-77), though from what survives they differ in the details.¹⁰² What Hipponax meant to do with the fable is unclear. Though Callimachus' version is also fragmentary, the Diegesis clarifies that the fable is about Bathycles' cup, which was to be given to the wisest of the Seven Sages,

⁹⁸ Babrius 66, Phaedrus 4.10.

⁹⁹ Heyworth 2001, p. 136-137. He suggests that Catullan omission of beast-fable is a reason for Horace to take it up in Epode 6.

¹⁰⁰ Holzberg 2002 surveys appearances of ancient fable (pp. 12-13) and identifies fables including animals alone, humans and animals, humans and objects, gods and animals, gods alone, and personifications all as possibilities (pp. 19-20). Fable is very diverse. Acosta-Hughes 2002, pp. 104-105, sees human or divine stories as part of an "elevated paradigm" (not fable) which Callimachus sets at variance with the "low exempla" of fable, though I question the usefulness of this distinction.

¹⁰¹ The fragments are 63W (καὶ Μύσων, ὃν Ὀδύλλων / ἀνείπεν ἀνδρῶν σωφρονέστατον πάντων, "and Myson, whom Apollo / proclaimed wisest of all men") and 123W (καὶ δικάζεσθαι Βίαντος τοῦ Πριηνεῶς κρέσσον, "and to be judged better than Bias of Priene").

¹⁰² As Acosta-Hughes 2002, pp. 143-144, points out, Hipponax includes Myson but Callimachus does not: "a novel retelling of a Hipponactean theme itself helps to confirm Callimachus in an iambic tradition." Both Callimachus *Iambos* 1 and Hipponax 63W are in choliambics (Hipponax 123W is a tetrameter, and likely comes from a different poem).

and ends up being sent by each to the next. Unfortunately, the moral of both the Diegesis and of the actual poem is fragmentary, but the ultimate point appears to be that “certain ‘men of learning’ [should] not vie with one another for pre-eminence.”¹⁰³ This “scholarly selflessness”¹⁰⁴ matches well with Catullus’ acknowledgement that he may not have the right to criticize (though this is of course undercut by the fact that he has already done so). The Bathycles described by Callimachus’ ‘Hipponax’ is “a man who acknowledges wisdom in others that he is not claiming for himself.”¹⁰⁵

The fable in Callimachus’ *Iambos* 1 is used specifically in the context of correcting the squabbling scholars’ faults; compare Archilochus’ fable of the fox and the eagle, which is a vehicle for shaming Lycambes for backing out of his oath. In other words, the fable in *iambos* gives the appearance of universality but its message has specific targets. I am not arguing that Catullus specifically alludes to the Seven Sages fable, but based on his iambic predecessors, Catullus is tapping into the same strategy: attacking a target with a moral lesson from a fable. Krostenko sees the pulling back from criticism as indicative of a desire to “save” Suffenus,¹⁰⁶ but this confusion is based specifically on Catullus’ choice to end with the fable rather than directly connecting it to Suffenus.

¹⁰³ Nisetich 2001, p. 96.

¹⁰⁴ Acosta-Hughes 2002, p. 151.

¹⁰⁵ Kerkhecker 1999, p. 37.

¹⁰⁶ Krostenko 2001a, p. 270 (further explored in Krostenko 2007, p. 224). He connects the moral tale with rhetorical usage, which is often used to stress traditional values (cf. *Rhetorica ad Herrenium* 4.24). See also Feldherr 2007, p. 94, on Catullan judgement of others’ failed social performances, and Selden 1992, p. 476-478, who sees this failure to drive the knife home as confirmation that Suffenus’ paradoxical situation is a stand-in for the dichotomy between poet and poetic *persona* (cf. also Sheets 2007, p. 207).

The choliambic metrical structure also undercuts Catullus' magnanimous inclusiveness, confirming and deepening Watson's position that "while the concluding lines may appear to moderate Catullus' criticisms of Suffenus, the poem as a whole actually reinforces them by throwing into relief the latter's artistic infelicities and plodding traditionalism."¹⁰⁷ *Suffenum* now appears in the final position of line 19 as the negative example to be avoided. If all men are guilty of ignoring their own faults, Suffenus is most guilty.¹⁰⁸ The awkwardness of line 18 (with three elisions) may also undermine the sentiment of the fable, as does the second foot of line 19, which includes a resolution:

nimirum idem omnes fallimur, neque est quisquam

— — ∪ ∪ | — || — ∪ — | ∪ — — x

quem non in aliqua re videre Suffenum

Catullus 22.18-19

The phrase *in aliqua re* is additionally prosaic and unsophisticated. Considering these purposeful metrical infelicities, even if *Suffenum* is only an example ("a Suffenus" rather than "Suffenus"), he is a wholly *negative* example, and the man now fully stands in for his fault *and* anyone else's.

Catullus keeps bringing up the distinction between surface appearance and reality throughout poem 22, and his difficulty with Suffenus is rooted precisely in this tension. A surface reading of the end of the poem is that Catullus, via mild self-parody, ultimately accepts Suffenus—and perhaps is advising Varus to do the same, since there is little

¹⁰⁷ Watson 1990, p. 15. He goes on to identify *manticae* as wallets carried by rustics.

¹⁰⁸ This use of fable, "'truth with a smile,' in texts ... satirical in tone," in order to "serv[e] as illustration to help expose human follies and vices," is traditional, appearing in the Archaic iambicists and Callimachus as well as the Roman satirists Ennius and Lucilius (Holzberg 2002, p. 18).

reason to make him the addressee unless Varus holds a positive opinion not only of Suffenus' books but of the man himself. The problem Catullus diagnoses seems not enough to deny that acceptance, even if it proves incurable. But this is only appearance, and the metrical undercurrent contradicts Varus' opinion of Suffenus as *homo* as well. The reality, revealed in the metrical structure of Catullus' poem—just as Suffenus' nature is revealed in his poetry rather than by the appearance of the fancy materials in which it is packaged—is a rejection of Suffenus and what he represents: surface over substance. The choice of the most awkward of meters, the 'lame' and 'unrhythmical' choliamb, for a poem about an awkward poet is itself appropriately awkward, well-suited for *carefully* "careless writing" about Suffenus' careless writing in a carefully crafted package.¹⁰⁹

Catullus 44: Choliamb as Cure

*O funde noster seu Sabine seu Tiburs
 (nam te esse Tiburtem autumant, quibus non est
 cordi Catullum laedere; at quibus cordi est,
 quovis Sabinum pignore esse contendunt),
 sed seu Sabine sive verius Tiburs, 5
 fui libenter in tua suburbana
 villa, malamque pectore expuli tussim,
 non inmerenti quam mihi meus venter,
 dum sumptuosas appeto, dedit, cenas:
 nam, Sestianus dum volo esse conviva, 10
 orationem in Antium petito rem
 plenam veneni et pestilentiae legi.
 hic me gravedo frigida et frequens tussis
 quassavit usque, dum in tuum sinum fugi,
 et me recuravi otioque et urtica. 15*

¹⁰⁹ Fordyce 1961 (p. 151, *ad loc.*) identifies the repetition of *idem* at 22.14 and 15 as a piece of "careless writing," translating the sentence as "the man who seemed a wit is at the same time a dullard at poetry and at the same time nothing makes him so happy." The translation is awkward to fit the awkward repetition of *idem*, and as such is amusingly appropriate to both content and meter. Catullus' awkward writing only *seems* careless; after all, "Suffenus' faults are not Catullus'" (Watson 1990, p. 15).

*quare refectus maximas tibi grates
ago, meum quod non es ulta peccatum.
nec deprecor iam, si nefaria scripta
Sesti recepso, quin gravedinem et tussim
non mi, sed ipsi Sestio ferat frigus, 20
qui tunc vocat me, cum malum librum legi.*

My farm, whether Sabine or Tiburtine
(for those affirm that you are Tiburtine who do not
love to annoy Catullus, but those who do
will wager anything that you are Sabine)—
but at all events, whether you are Sabine or more rightly
Tiburtine, 5
I was glad to be in your suburban
retreat, and to clear my chest of a nasty cough,
which (not undeservedly) my belly gave me
while I was running after costly feasts.
I wanted to go to Sestius' as a dinner guest, 10
and so a speech of his against Antius the candidate,
full of poison and plague, I read.
Thereupon a shivering chill and a constant cough
shook me to pieces, till at last to your bosom I fled,
and set myself right again by a diet of laziness and nettle
broth. 15
So now, having recovered, I return you my best thanks
because you did not punish my error.
And henceforth, if I ever again take the abominable
writings
of Sestius in hand, I freely consent that catarrh and cough
not upon me, but upon Sestius himself, the chill shall bring, 20
for only inviting me when I have read a nasty book.
Catullus 44

In poem 44, Catullus catches a cold. The proximate cause is the “frigid” literary style of Sestius’ speech against Antius, which Catullus parodies, but Catullus also mocks his own status anxiety by blaming his willingness to read the speech in the first place on the desire to attend a sumptuous dinner and by calling special attention to the ambiguous status of the poem’s addressee, his Sabine or Tiburtine *fundus*. Catullus sacrifices his literary sensibilities for what amounts to a social-climbing event, but poem 44 itself not

only *suggests* a cure—medicine and rest—but acts as a *vehicle* for one, in effect restoring Catullus’ literary credentials through allusions to the choliamb’s creator Hipponax by a successful parody of Sestius’ style and via the harsh cure of the stinging nettle as a metaphor for the choliambic meter. This culminates in what is little more than a volitive transfer of the sickness to Sestius instead. Catullus shies away from using the final part of the choliambic line to insult Sestius directly. Instead, he uses it to attack the frigid literary style of Sestius’ speech, for words denoting the speech directly, and to attack his own greed, which spurred him to read the disease-bearing speech in the first place. The poem as a whole presumably mocks Sestius’ own usage through imitation, parodying legal language, religious language, or both.¹¹⁰ Though Sestius’ speech itself is lost, the word *frigus* is a clue as to its style.¹¹¹ The final part of Catullus’ choliambic line is taken up with egregious repetitions or explanations, words for the speech, and the symptoms of the cold. Sestius, however, is scrupulously kept from the end of the line, as Suffenus was at the beginning of poem 22. I doubt strongly that Catullus bears Sestius any real ill-will,¹¹² and the placement of his name in the poem suggests that Sestius is at most only a secondary target; Catullus *himself* is the primary target. An analysis of the metrical structure of the choliamb supports a reading like Skinner’s,¹¹³ which suggests that poem 44 was meant as ribbing (rather than as an attack, as Buchheit and Quinn suggest).¹¹⁴

¹¹⁰ Legal: Ronconi 1953; religious: Heusch 1954 and Jones 1968; both: Thomson 1997 [1978] and Skinner 2001. De Angeli 1969 argues that the parody is of Sestius’ own style.

¹¹¹ Fordyce 1961, De Angeli 1969, and Vine 2009.

¹¹² Cf. Neudling 1955, pp. 160-162, on Cicero’s tolerance of Sestius despite the style of his speech.

¹¹³ Skinner 2001, p. 63, following a suggestion of Stehle.

¹¹⁴ Buchheit 1959, pp. 313-315; Quinn 1973 [1970], p. 220: “Sestius, for whom [Catullus] reserves more than a hint of malice.”

This is not to say that Sestius' *style* escapes unscathed. Part of the joke of poem 44 relies on the Roman concept of what makes a work *frigidus* ("frigid"), noun form *frigus* ("frigidity"), a translation of the Greek literary-critical term ψυχρότης, used to describe "exaggerated, glittering phrases and the like."¹¹⁵ The critic Demetrius describes frigidity as the fault corresponding to the grand style (which might well include religious language); he also splits frigidity into three types: frigidity in diction, which Aristotle had described, and new categories of frigidity in thought and in composition:¹¹⁶

... ὀρίζεται δὲ τὸ ψυχρὸν Θεόφραστος οὕτως, ψυχρὸν ἐστὶ τὸ ὑπερβάλλον τὴν οἰκείαν ἀπαγγελίαν, τὸ γὰρ πρᾶγμα σμικρὸν ὄν οὐ δέχεται ὄγκον τοσοῦτον λέξεως.

Γίνεται μέντοι καὶ τὸ ψυχρὸν ἐν τρισίν, ὥσπερ καὶ τὸ μεγαλοπρεπές· ἢ γὰρ ἐν διανοίᾳ, καθάπερ ἐπὶ τοῦ Κύκλωπος λιθοβολοῦντος τὴν ναῦν τοῦ Ὀδυσσεύως ἔφη τις, "φερομένου τοῦ λίθου αἶγες ἐνέμοντο ἐν αὐτῷ." ἐκ γὰρ τοῦ ὑπερβεβλημένου τῆς διανοίας καὶ ἀδυνάτου ἡ ψυχρότης. ... σύνθεσις δὲ ψυχρὰ ἢ μὴ εὐρυθμος, ἀλλὰ ἄρυθμος οὔσα καὶ διὰ πάντων μακρὰν ἔχουσα ψυχρὸν δὲ καὶ τὸ μέτρα τιθέναι συνεχῇ, καθάπερ τινές, καὶ μὴ κλεπτόμενα ὑπὸ τῆς συνεχείας· ποιήμα γὰρ ἄκαιρον ψυχρὸν, ὥσπερ καὶ τὸ ὑπέρμετρον.

... frigidity is defined by Theophrastus as "that which exceeds its appropriate form of expression," The trivial subject does not allow such magniloquence.

Frigidity, like grandeur, has three aspects. It may be in the thought, as in one writer's description of the Cyclops throwing a rock at Odysseus' ship, "as the rock was rushing along, goats were browsing on it." This is frigid because the thought is exaggerated and impossible. ... Composition is frigid when it lacks good rhythm, or has no rhythm when it has exclusively long syllables, It is also frigid to introduce, as some do, continuous metrical phrases, since their continuity makes them obtrude. A line of verse in prose is out of place, and as frigid as too many syllables to the line in verse.

Demetrius *On Style* 114-115, 117-118¹¹⁷

Demetrius also holds the key to excusing Catullus' own frigidity in the service of sending up Sestius':

¹¹⁵ *LSJ* sv. ψυχρότης II.2.

¹¹⁶ Aristotle lists compound words; strange words or glosses; epithets, whether overused, inappropriate or too lengthy; and metaphors that skew either too tragic or too comic for their speech (*Rhetoric* 3.3.1-4).

¹¹⁷ Text and translation from Innes 1999 [1995], pp. 420-423.

καὶ καθόλου ὁποῖόν τί ἐστὶν ἢ ἀλαζονεία, τοιοῦτον καὶ ἡ ψυχρότης· ὃ τε γὰρ ἀλαζών τὰ μὴ προσόντα αὐτῷ ἀνχεῖ ὅμως ὡς προσόντα, ὃ τε μικροῖς πράγμασιν περιβάλλων ὄγκον καὶ αὐτὸς ἐν μικροῖς ἀλαζονευομένῳ ἔοικεν. ...

Καίτοι τινές φασι δεῖν τὰ μικρὰ μεγάλως λέγειν, καὶ σημεῖον τοῦτο ἡγοῦνται ὑπερβαλλούσης δυνάμεως. ἐγὼ δὲ Πολυκράτει μὲν τῷ ῥήτορι συγχωρῶ ... ἔπαιζεν γάρ, οὐκ ἐσπούδαζεν, καὶ αὐτὸς τῆς γραφῆς ὁ ὄγκος παίγνιον ἐστὶ. παίζειν μὲν δὴ ἐξέστω, ὡς φημί, τὸ δὲ πρέπον ἐν παντὶ πράγματι φυλακτέον, τοῦτ' ἔστι προσφόρως ἐρμηνευτέον, τὰ μὲν μικρὰ μικρῶς, τὰ μεγάλα δὲ μεγάλως, ...

In general, there is a sort of analogy between boastfulness and frigidity. The boaster pretends that qualities belong to him even if they do not, while the writer who adds pomp to trifles is himself like the man who boasts about trifles. ...

There are, however, people who hold that we should use grand language on slight themes, and regard it as a sign of exceptional skill. For my own part, I excuse the rhetorician Polycrates He was being playful and not in earnest; the very inflation of his writing is part of the play. So play, as I say, is legitimate, but otherwise preserve propriety, whatever the subject; or in other words, use the relevant style, slight for slight themes, grand for grand themes, ...

Demetrius *On Style* 119-120¹¹⁸

In Rome, frigidity entered into the debate on oratorical style, particularly when “the speaker or writer loses track of the mode of expression appropriate to the occasion.”¹¹⁹

This has the effect of alienating an audience through overexplanation and unfamiliar or inappropriate language.

Specific indications of parody are difficult to check without Sestius' speech; we can, however, detect when poem 44 itself is engaging in literary frigidity;¹²⁰ playing on Sestius' style means exaggerating his frigidity, and Catullus' choice of the choliamb (which “lacks good rhythm”) works with the address in heightened religious language to his own *fundus* (a “slight theme”) in lines 1-7.

¹¹⁸ Text and translation from Innes 1999 [1995], pp. 422-425.

¹¹⁹ Williams 1988, p. 130, with further references.

¹²⁰ Williams 1988, p. 130. The approach is suggested by De Angeli 1969, p. 356, who interprets it “as the pastiche type of parody in which the style of the original rather than the content is imitated.” See also Thomson 1997 [1978], p. 314ff., on legal and religious language (with further references).

Parody and prayer in an unserious context were identified with Hipponax' poetry through the lens of Greek Comedy.¹²¹ The fragments themselves suggest something similar, revealing Hipponax' anxiety over wealth; he often addresses gods either to complain about his poverty or specifically to ask for money and goods.¹²² A similar combination occurs in Catullus 44, suggesting a connection stronger than meter between the two poets in this case. Quinn has recognized that there is a particularly Roman spin on Catullus' religious address to his estate (the *fundus* of the first line), with "anxiety to ensure the farm is properly addressed."¹²³ But it is more relevant that Catullus betrays anxiety over his status, a logical extension of anxiety over wealth.¹²⁴ A Tiburtine *fundus* would be far more fashionable than a Sabine *fundus*. The phrasing forces the reader to make a choice between what Catullus characterizes as *unjustified* hostility towards himself or else acknowledgement of what Catullus repeatedly insists is the *truth*: that the *fundus* is *verius Tiburs* (l. 5).¹²⁵ However, the repetition or near-repetition of phrases in the final "limping" foot of the opening lines (*Tiburs* and *Tiburs*, ll. 1 & 5; *quibus non est* and *quibus cordi est*, ll. 3 & 4) actually serves to underscore Catullus' status anxiety.

Catullus not only feels the need to stress that the *fundus* is "really" Tiburtine, but also

¹²¹ See Rotstein 2010, pp. 204-206, concerning Hipponax's reputation in Greek Comedy as a parodist of prayer; the fragment in question is assigned to Hipponax by Dionysus in Aristophanes *Frogs* 661, but following the scholiast, Gerber 1999, pp. 502-505, assigns it to Ananius instead (cf. Degani 1984, pp. 27-28).

¹²² Fr. 32W asks Hermes for gifts, including money; fr. 38W addresses Zeus in prayer, asking why wealth has not been forthcoming. Cf. fr. 36W, which, while not in the form of a prayer, excoriates the god Wealth for not giving Hipponax wealth.

¹²³ Quinn 1973 [1970], p. 221.

¹²⁴ Cf. poem 10, where Catullus attempts to puff up his status by convincing a new acquaintance of his monetary success in Bithynia, success which turns out to be nonexistent.

¹²⁵ Pavlock 2013, pp. 606-607, suggests that because of the juxtaposition of two types of "social snobbery" in poems 43 ("the 'ranking' of a mistress's beauty") and 44 ("the location of his property"), Mamurra might well be included among Catullus' unidentified enemies who maliciously mislabel the *fundus* as Sabine.

reveals that others' opinions of *himself* sway their classification of the *fundus*. The repetition also engages in one of the characteristics of frigidity: overexplanation. The phrases' placement in the final part of the choliambic line calls metrical attention to them as awkward and unrhythmical.¹²⁶

Catullus transposes the literary-critical term to the physical realm, catching a cold (*frigus*) from the frigidity of Sestius' speech:¹²⁷

_ _ ∪ _ | _ || _ ∪ _ | _ _ x
nec deprecor iam, si nefaria scripta
 _ _ ∪ _ | _ || _ ∪ _ | _ _ x
Sesti recepso, quin gravedinem et tussim
 _ _ ∪ _ | _ || _ ∪ _ | _ _ x
non mi, sed ipsi Sestio ferat frigus,
 Catullus 44.18-20

Catullus here is rather obliquely wishing that the cold (*frigus*) wreak its symptoms on Sestius, the one who provided the *nefaria scripta* of line 18, but he soon acknowledges his own complicity with *legi* in the final line.¹²⁸ The *scripta*, as the source of the disease that causes all the trouble, appropriately take up the last foot of the line. As for *frigus* itself, Vine suggests a Hipponactean model. Hipponax fr. 34W uses the Greek word for cold, ῥῑγος, also a spondee and very similar in sound:¹²⁹

¹²⁶ *Seu Tiburs* at the end of line 1 breaks the iambic trimeter with three emphatic long syllables and *verius Tiburs* at the end of line 5 keeps the *ver-* stem—which denotes truth—out of the same metron as *Tiburs*. In both cases, *Tiburs* takes up the same part of the line as *non est* in line 2 and *—tendunt* in line 4; is calling the *fundus* Tiburtine stretching (*tendo* → *contendo*) the truth? The form of *verius* also points in this direction; logically, how can the estate belong to one neighborhood *more* truly? The truth must be that the *fundus* is in one or the other.

¹²⁷ Fordyce 1961, pp. 197-198, gives further examples of writers who play with the word in this way; Catullus is neither the first nor the last.

¹²⁸ Again, the language seems religious (Heusch 1954 and Jones 1968) rather than legalistic (Ronconi 1953, pp. 202ff.), but as Skinner 2001 points out (p. 60), there may be a reference to Cicero's *Pro Murena* 26.

¹²⁹ Vine 2009, p. 214.

ἐμοὶ γὰρ οὐκ ἔδωκας οὔτε κω χλαῖναν
 δασεῖαν ἐν χειμῶνι φάρμακον ῥίγεις,
 οὔτ' ἀσκήρησι τοὺς πόδας δασεῖησιν
 ἔκρυψας, ὥς μοι μὴ χίμετλα ῥήγνυται.

For you haven't yet given me a thick cloak as a remedy against the cold in winter nor have you covered my feet with thick felt shoes, so that my chilblains not burst.

Hipponax 34W¹³⁰

A “*pharmakos*” for the cold is exactly what Catullus is looking for in poem 44.

There is also a connection to prayer in the Hipponax fragment. Hipponax is plausibly addressing his wish for a χλαῖνα δασεῖα, a thick cloak, to Hermes. Hermes is the one most likely to provide this “cure” to Hipponax, not only because games in his honor had such a cloak as a prize,¹³¹ but also because of his association with wealth acquisition.¹³² Along the same lines, the *fundus* of Catullus is the best possible source of a cure for *his* cold, and as Armstrong points out, the personification of the *fundus* may call to mind “a mother or nurse,” a fitting choice to take care of someone who is sick.¹³³ Catullus is playing on *frigus/frigidus* as translations of not only ψυχρός, which can mean cold as an adjective (the opposite of ‘hot’) in addition to its being a literary-critical term, but also ῥῆγος, which can refer both to a cold (in the sense of a frost) as well as to a shivering fit.¹³⁴ In both cases, Catullus abandons the literal for the extended definition.

The group *gravedinem – tussim – frigus* (ll. 19-20) also appears at line 13:

¹³⁰ Translation from Gerber 1999, p. 381. Vine does not treat the verb ῥήγνυται, which while unrelated to ῥίγεις is noteworthy as it is a verb of breaking or bursting in exactly that part of the line which breaks the iambic rhythm, according to Demetrius *On Style* 301 (though Demetrius uses a form of the verb θραύω).

¹³¹ Gerber 1999, p. 381, n. 1, with further references.

¹³² In fr. 3aW, Hipponax seems to be asking Hermes for help in a theft, and in fr. 32W he asks him for warm clothing as well as money, also possibly as a result of theft. See West 1974, p. 29.

¹³³ Armstrong 2013, p. 69, citing *in tuum sinum fugi* (l. 14).

¹³⁴ LSJ s.v. ψυχρός I. & II.4; LSJ s.v. ῥῆγος 1 & 2. See Vine 2009, p. 215, n. 12, on this point.

_ _ ∪ _||_ ∪ ||_ | ∪ _ _ x
hic me gravedo frigida et frequens tussis
 Catullus 44.13

Here *frigida* is set off by both a third- and a fourth-foot caesura, emphasizing it in the exact middle of the line; this lets the reader know *why* Sestius' speech is infectious.¹³⁵

The *tussis* itself appears “exactly where the regular iambic rhythm suddenly coughs up a trochee,” at the final foot of lines 7, 13, & 19.¹³⁶ Morgan argues that the hyperbaton in line 9 “is meant to suggest the cough that is the object of the misplaced word in question, *dedit*.”¹³⁷ The interruption in the flow of the speech mimics the symptom of the *frigus*; “catchy” repetition of *tussis* is a sign of infection.

A further Hipponax fragment offers a further, and previously unnoticed, connection to Catullus 44, linking parody and curative. In fr. 39W, Hipponax threatens to “give in to evils” (commit suicide?) in a parody of epic speech.¹³⁸ It turns out that he is asking to be given an ingredient, a *medimnus* of barley, in order that he might make a drug from it to stave off his poverty (πονηρία):

κακοῖσι δώσω τὴν πολύστονον ψυχὴν,
 ἢν μὴ ἀποπέμψῃς ὥς τάχιστα μοι κριθέων
 μέδιμνον, ὥς ἂν ἀλφίτων ποιήσωμαι
 κυκεῶνα πίνειν φάρμακον πονηρίας.

I will surrender my grieving soul to an evil end, if you do not send me a bushel of barley as quickly as you can, so that I may make a potion from

¹³⁵ Perhaps *hic* should be *hinc*, as Bergk suggests, making the source of the illness clearer (see Trappes-Lomax 2007, p. 116).

¹³⁶ Vine 2009, p. 214; the regularity of the cough interrupting the poem was pointed out by David Coffin (n. 8).

¹³⁷ Morgan 2010b, p. 126. Quinn 1973 [1970], p. 221, suggests that “the dislocated order ... reinforces the limping iambic metre.”

¹³⁸ Rosen 1987, pp. 416 & 425, n. 36, with further references.

the groats to drink as a cure for my suffering.
 Hipponax 39W¹³⁹

The ingredients are different, but here Hipponax is seeking a cure for his hunger. In poem 44, Catullus is seeking a cure for an illness whose proximate cause is Sestius' speech, but whose *ultimate* cause is his own greed for sumptuous meals (*sumptuosas ... cenas*, l. 9). Hipponax's placement of *πονηρίας* in the final metron of line 4 of poem 39W is analogous to Catullus' placement of *frigus* at 44.20; they are each an identification of the disease.¹⁴⁰

Catullus' own appetites have put him in this situation:

_ _ ∪ _ | _ _ ∪ _ | ∪ _ _ x
non inmerenti quam mihi meus venter,
 _ _ ∪ _ | _ _ ∪ _ | ∪ _ _ x
dum sumptuosas appeto, dedit, cenas:
 _ _ ∪ _ | _ _ ∪ _ | ∪ _ _ x
nam, Sestianus dum volo esse conviva,
 Catullus 44.8-10

Words for his belly (*meus venter*, l. 8) and its desire for a free meal as a dinner guest (*cenas*, l. 9; *conviva*, l. 10) are at the end of three successive lines; in other words, Catullus is targeting his own greed.¹⁴¹ The only cure is the very appropriate (and the only certain) ingredient in Catullus' healing concoction of line 15: *urtica*, a nettle.¹⁴² Its

¹³⁹ Translation from Gerber 1999, p. 385. See also Hipponax fr. 58W, “κᾶλειφα ρόδινον ἥδὺ καὶ λέκος πυροῦ (and a sweet unguent made from roses and a pan of wheat),” Gerber 1999, pp. 398-399, with further references.

¹⁴⁰ Note also the onomatopoeia of *ψυχὴν* at the end of line 1 of Hipponax 39W, which quite appropriately sounds like the speaker expelling his breath.

¹⁴¹ For possible connections between gluttony and the *pharmakos* tradition in Hipponax, see Compton 2006, pp. 64-66, with further references.

¹⁴² The first ingredient is uncertain. Thomson 1997 [1978] prints *otio*, but suggests (p. 315) that *ocimo*, basil, might make better sense; cf. Trappes-Lomax 2007, pp. 116-117, who demonstrates that both are equally plausible based on the *mss.* McKie 2009, pp. 166-167, n. 549, disagrees on the grounds that the

placement at the end of the line suggests that it may stand in not only as a cure for what ails Catullus (medically sound, according to Celsus 4.10), but for choliambic poetry generally and poem 44 in particular. The choice of a nettle cannot be coincidental; on the one hand it is associated with austerity, precisely what Catullus is lacking (and Skinner suggests that it is meant to recall the sumptuary law of Antius, Sestius' political opponent.)¹⁴³ But the nettle's primary characteristic is that it *stings*, linking it with the common iambic function of goading a target into appropriate behavior;¹⁴⁴ in this case, Catullus is goading himself into not being ruled by the prospect of *sumptuosas cenas*.

This is a harsh but necessary remedy for his transgression (the *peccatum* at the end of line 17, referring to the act of reading something that Catullus well knows will be *frigus*).¹⁴⁵ Rosen connects Hipponax's potion in fr. 39W, the *κυκεών*, with the Eleusinian mysteries (my underlining):

In view of the connection between the *kykeon* and ritual abuse in actual Eleusinian practice, it is easy to see how the *πονηρία* of Hipponax's speaker can refer to abuse from his enemies, akin to the abuse originally suffered (albeit in jest) by Demeter, and by initiates every year in her rites at Eleusis. ... The *kykeon* effects Demeter's recovery from grief and from Iambe's abuse, but does not

double connective –*que* + *et* lose sense if the connected things are similar, and would require an explanation of “what purpose there would be in Catullus' saying ‘with *both* basil and nettle.’” The fact that the elided connectives (*que. et*) occur exactly at the final metron, where the iambic trimeter breaks down into a choliamb, adds to the sylleptic break between *otio* and *urtica*. This adds weight to the reading *otio*. Another possibility is that the reading *ocimo* could be replaced with *ocino*, which (according to Varro *De Re Rustica* 1.31.4) was fed to cattle as a purgative (diuretic, not emetic). Varro says that the name is derived from the Greek *ὠκέως* (“quickly”). Perhaps the quick cure of the trimeter *ocino* is followed by the slower and surer cure of the choliambic *urtica*?

¹⁴³ Skinner 2001, p. 61.

¹⁴⁴ It is also possible that Catullus is making reference to the scapegoat (*pharmakos*) ritual found in a number of Hipponax's fragments (fr. 5-10W). Though Hipponax describes the ritual as involving a squill (*σκιλλα*), the squill has much the same medicinal effects as the stinging nettle (Bremmer 1983, p. 310; Celsus 4.10). Catullus has in effect taken on the *peccatum* of Sestius, his frigid style, and turned it into his own personal *peccatum* (both by imitation and by blaming himself for greed).

¹⁴⁵ Sestius' stylistic problems were well known. See Fordyce 1961, p. 198, for contemporary views on his style.

inspire her with the spirit of invective. Hipponax's speaker, on the other hand ... plays the role both of Demeter (as drinker of the *kykeon*) and of Iambe (as "aischrologist"). ... Ultimately it is the iambos itself, as evoked by the mention of the ritual *kykeon*, that becomes the φάρμακον against ... objective, moral πονηρία.¹⁴⁶

This last is precisely the function of the *urtica* in Catullus 44, which evokes the choliamb by its association with stinging and by its placement at the end of the line (but turned inward at Catullus rather than outward at others, as Rosen argues for the *κυκεών*).¹⁴⁷ The *urtica*, the choliamb, and the nursemaid *fundus* (according to Armstrong)¹⁴⁸ work together to cure Catullus. Instead of enabling him to attack his enemies, they allow him to attack his own moral failing: letting base greed overcome his sense of literary style. In a sense, then, Sestius, whose stylistic failings are well-known but is himself kept away from the end of the choliambic line, is not Catullus' primary target. Catullus' own *peccatum* is the fact that he read (*legi*, at the end of lines 12 and 21) what he could well have guessed would be *frigus*.¹⁴⁹

Catullus mocks Sestius' frigid style by imitation and by playing on different meanings of the word *frigus*. But with the harsh choliambic line-end, Catullus lays out his symptoms (*tussim*, l. 7; *tussis*, l. 13; *tussim*, l. 19; *frigus*, l. 20) and targets his own greedy willingness to put himself through the painful task of reading Sestius' speech (*legi*, l. 12; *scripta*, l. 18; *legi*, l. 21) for the sake of a free meal (*venter*, l. 8; *cenas*, l. 9; *conviva*, l. 10). The cure is the *urtica*, the stinging nettle, as well as poem 44 itself:

¹⁴⁶ Rosen 1987, pp. 421-422.

¹⁴⁷ Rosen 1987, pp. 417-418.

¹⁴⁸ Armstrong 2013, p. 69.

¹⁴⁹ Trappes-Lomax 2007, pp. 117-118, suggests deleting the final line in order to end the poem with *frigus* (cf. Quinn 1973 [1970] *ad loc.*), but this is a poem about bloated repetition and overexplanation, and in that context line 21 appropriately belabors the point.

Sestius himself is kept from the end of the line, and Catullus uses litotes in asserting that he will not pray to avert (*nec deprecor*, l. 18) the sickness from affecting Sestius himself (*ipsi Sestio ferat frigus*, l. 20), a carefully couched alternative to praying *for* the sickness to affect Sestius. Catullus alludes to Hipponax not for a direct attack on Sestius himself, but for the themes of parodic prayer, medical complaint, and *iambos* as curative.

Catullus 8: Iambic vs. Erotic

*Miser Catulle, desinas ineptire,
et quod vides perisse perditum ducas.
fulsere quondam candidi tibi soles,
cum ventitabas quo puella ducebat
amata tantum quantum amabitur nulla. 5
ibi illa multa cum iocosa fiebant,
quae tu volebas nec puella nolebat,
fulsere vere candidi tibi soles.
nunc iam illa non vult; tu quoque inpote<ns noli>,
nec quae fugit sectare, nec miser vive, 10
sed obstinata mente perfer, obdura.
vale, puella. iam Catullus obdurat,
nec te requiret nec rogabit invitam.
at tu dolebis, cum rogaberis nulla.
scelestas, vae te! quae tibi manet vita? 15
quis nunc te adibit? cui videberis bella?
quem nunc amabis? cuius esse diceris?
quem basiabis? cui labella mordebis?
at tu, Catulle, destinatus obdura.*

Poor Catullus, it's time you should cease your folly,
and account as lost what you see is lost.
Once the days shone bright on you,
when you used to go so often where my mistress led,
she who was loved by me as none will ever be loved. 5
There and then were given us these joys, so many, so
merry,
which you desired nor did my lady not desire.
Bright for you, truly, shone the days.
Now she desires no more—no more should you desire,

poor madman,
 nor follow her who flees, nor live in misery, 10
 but with resolved mind endure, be firm.
 Farewell, my mistress; now Catullus is firm;
 he will not seek you nor ask you against your will.
 But you will be sorry, when you'll be asked not at all,
 Ah, poor wretch! what life is left for you? 15
 Who now will visit you? to whom will you seem fair?
 whom now will you love? by whose name will you be
 called?
 whom will you kiss? whose lips will you bite?
 But you, Catullus, be resolved and firm.
 Catullus 8¹⁵⁰

The deliberate choice of the choliamb for poem 8 is an attempt by Catullus to regain control of himself by ridding himself of his lovesickness for Lesbia. In his invective choliamb, where he shows himself at all, Catullus is firmly in control of the situation; he punishes Egnatius and the tavern-dwellers in poem 37, describing the means of their punishment; in poem 39, he takes aim at Egnatius again for his personal habits and presents himself as the arbiter of appropriate behavior; in poem 59, there is no need for Catullus to intervene, as the inappropriate behavior is punished by another agent (the *ustor* of line 5). Even in poem 22, Catullus only puts forth a pretense of being at a loss as to how to catalogue Suffenus, and in poem 44, his self-parody is predicated on the acknowledgement that the choice to read Sestius' speech was his own decision, foolish as it ended up being. In poem 8, Catullus attempts to use this choliambic chastisement as an inoculation against his lovesickness, to reassert self-control, and though the choliambic limp literally has the last word (*ōbdūrā*, l.19), the outcome is far from certain. The intratextuality of poem 8 with other poems in the corpus is both a help and a hindrance,

¹⁵⁰ Text from Thomson 1997 [1978] except *tantum* for *nobis* in line 5.

and the iambic allusions, despite their appearance on what is essentially an iambic battleground, are outnumbered by the erotic.

Poem 8, like 44, seeks to transform the invective component of choliambic poetry into a curative for Catullus' own ills.¹⁵¹ Just as Catullus' illness in poem 44 is caused by his own greed for a dinner invitation, which overrides his better (literary) judgment, so his lovesickness in poem 8 is caused by a lack of self-control and a wavering mind when it comes to Lesbia.¹⁵² Whereas in poem 44 the final limp of the choliambic line provides a literal, physical cure (*et me recuravi otioque et urtica*, l. 15), in poem 8 that same foot is taken up primarily with the narrator's struggle to wrest control of lovesick Catullus away from that of what under normal circumstances would be the *object* of his interest: Lesbia.

The multivocality of Catullus in poem 8 has been fruitfully discussed elsewhere.¹⁵³ Though the struggle for self/selves-control in poem 8 raises interesting questions, here I am most concerned with Catullus' use of genre, the choice he makes to write the poem in choliambics.¹⁵⁴ I suggest that the choliambic frame is chosen because it is a traditional form for delivering advice in the harshest possible way,¹⁵⁵ and that its failure in this case is tied up in what Feeney describes as a "larger strategy of cross-

¹⁵¹ Johnson 2012, pp. 140-141, identifies a similar erotic-iambic tension in Horace *Epode* 11, suggesting that Catullus 8 is a precursor. For poem 44, see pp. 99-111 above.

¹⁵² Lesbia is unnamed, but connections with poem 5 make the identification all but certain.

¹⁵³ See Rowland 1966, Newman 1990 (pp. 158-160), Greene 1995, and Lavigne 2010.

¹⁵⁴ Lavigne 2010 asks this question (pp. 82ff.), and sees poem 8 as essentially riffing on the range of voices that make up the *personae* of the Archaic iambographers (and distance the iambic author from his *persona*; cf. Lavigne 2005 *passim*).

¹⁵⁵ In many cases, this "advice" is inextricably tied up with invective, as in Hipponax fr. 28W and 118aW. See Acosta-Hughes 2002, pp. 251-264, for Callimachus' taking up of the Hipponactean mantle of advice-dispenser.

reference and self-reference.”¹⁵⁶ Catullus’ attempt to cure himself of lovesickness in a poem within a larger corpus in which the Lesbia relationship looms so large is limited to at most partial success, despite its choliambic vehicle.¹⁵⁷

The insistent pounding of the three long syllables at the end of the choliambic line is normally used as a locus for insult or contempt, but in poem 8 it is used primarily for two distinct purposes:¹⁵⁸ to diagnose what Catullus has been doing wrong and to encourage himself to break the habit (thereby curing himself). The diagnoses are closest to typical usage of the final metron, as they represent something contemptible about himself that Catullus is attempting to correct within—and with—the choliambic poem.

The diagnosis is potentially made by the first word in c. 8 (*miser*); the word, very common in Catullus, is usually erotic and/or comic, and has strong associations with sickness, especially (almost exclusively in Catullus) lovesickness.¹⁵⁹ The exhortations to put a stop to the lovesickness begin with weaker grammatical constructions in the subjunctive but eventually switch to imperatives and then an indicative statement of fact when it first appears the cure has finally taken hold (l. 12).¹⁶⁰ The final position in the first two lines of the poem identify a symptom and suggest a course of treatment:

_ _ _ | _ | _ || _ _ | _ | _ _ x
miser Catulle, desinas ineptire,

¹⁵⁶ Feeney 2012, p. 43.

¹⁵⁷ I am less concerned with the order of the poems as they appear in the current corpus than with the cross-references that appear when the corpus is taken as a whole.

¹⁵⁸ In poem 8, the pounding is more insistent than usual; every line is end-stopped, making a “hard rhythm ... in keeping with the hard tone of the whole poem” (Fraenkel 1961, p. 52).

¹⁵⁹ Cf. *OLD* sv. *miser* 4; Quinn 1973 [1970] *ad loc.*: “the stock description of the unhappy lover.” For Catullus as comic *amator* in this poem, see Morris 1909, pp. 139-143; Wheeler 1934, pp. 227-230; and Skinner 1971. Catullus 101.6 describes his *frater* as *miser*, which cannot unequivocally be related to lovesickness.

¹⁶⁰ Again, this construction is common in comedy; see Fordyce 1961 *ad loc.*

_ _ _ _ | _ _ _ || _ | _ _ _ x
*et quod vides perisse perditum **ducas**.*
 Catullus 8.1-2

The verb *ineptire*, from Roman comedy, means “to talk or act absurdly.”¹⁶¹ Wrong action, of course, is a common target of iambicists, and for “talking absurdly” to appear in the most awkward part of the line is fitting. In terms of explaining the problem Catullus has, however, the word *ineptire* is rather unspecific. Catullus reveals and attacks a symptom, but not the ultimate cause. The placement of *ducas* at the end of the second line not only suggests the cure to the situation (“consider it lost”), but also initiates an accounting metaphor (see below on *ducebat*, l. 4) and reveals that Catullus himself is part of the problem (the personal ending –s). This problem has much to do with his own mind (since *ducas* is used in this case in a mental rather than physical sense): Catullus has no self-control (the sense of *inpot<ens noli>* at the end of line 9).

Again, the poem’s first word, *miser*, can be erotic, but this is its first appearance in the corpus. Perhaps its comic-erotic meaning is activated (or called into question) by its usage in others of Catullus’ poems; either way, the comic word *ineptire* at the end of the line makes it slightly clearer. The second line is marginally more revealing of the circumstances of the problem, but still reflects an inability to confront it head-on: “**the thing that** you see is clearly hopeless, consider **it** lost” (*quod vides perisse perditum ducas*). What exactly is *it*? Catullus idiomatically uses forms of *perdere* and *perire* to

¹⁶¹ L&S sv. *ineptio*. The verb appears three times in Terence, twice in the *Adelphoe* and once in the *Phormio*.

signify intense passion.¹⁶² The stumbling repetition *perisse* || *perditum* thus perfectly captures Catullus' mental stumbling over his unhealthy love for Lesbia. In fact, throughout the poem, repetitions of words or sounds (e.g., *ducas* – *ducebat*, ll. 2 & 4; *fulsere* ... *candidi tibi soles*, ll. 3 & 8; *amata* ... *amabitur* – *amabis*, ll. 5 & 17) parallel the processes of Catullus' mind as he attempts to break out of dangerously seductive patterns of behavior (especially in ll. 15-18).

Those patterns of behavior reveal themselves in lines 3-8, which describe a happier period of the relationship. This is a dangerous strategy, because rather than deal with the problem directly (either with targeted invective against Lesbia or at the very least with a succinct statement) Catullus opens up the iambic poem to the erotic genre. The suns (*soles*) of 8.3 & 8 recall line 4 of poem 5, the first 'kiss' poem, also replete with repetition (e.g. *mille, deinde centum, / dein mille altera, dein ... centum / deinde ... altera mille, deinde centum; / dein, ... milia*, ll. 7-10):

*soles occidere et redire possunt;
nobis, cum semel occidit brevis lux,
nox est perpetua una dormienda.*

Catullus 5.4-6¹⁶³

¹⁶² E.g. *deperit*, 35.12; *perdite*, 45.3; *perire*, 45.5. This idiom too is common in comedy (cf. Ellis 1889 [1876] *ad loc.* on 35.12). 8.2 particularly recalls the *periit perisse ducis* of Plautus *Trinummus* 1026 (Passerat 1608 *ad loc.*).

¹⁶³ Though both Thomson 1997 [1978] and Quinn 1973 [1970] *ad loc.* point to the tense of *occidit* as evidence that *nobis* refers to humans generally rather than to Catullus and Lesbia specifically, I think it telling that in the context of 8 what was *nobis* is now *tibi*, referring to Catullus alone. For 8.5 on the other hand, I think that *tantum* makes more sense than *nobis* (making 8.5 identical with 37.12), following (most recently) Trappes-Lomax 2007, p. 50. My feeling on the matter is less to do with whether or not there is a "multivocality of Catullus" at play (Lavigne 2010, p. 87, *contra* Quinn 1973 [1970] *ad loc.*) and more to do with the repetitive sounds in *amata tantum quantum amabitur* which are somewhat nullified with *nobis*. In a poem with such marked repetition of words and sounds, *tantum* is a more attractive reading.

Putting *soles* in the final position in 8.3 is an attempt to negatively color the time in his life when they were together. The attempt, however, is clearly a failure, as is clear from the line's wistful near-repetition:

fulsere quondam candidi tibi soles,

...

fulsere vere candidi tibi soles.

Catullus 8.3 & 8

The change from *quondam* to *vere* not only makes the statement as a whole more depressing, it implies that Catullus is dwelling on the past rather than putting it behind him.¹⁶⁴

At line 4 the issue is further clarified:

— — ∪ — | — — — ∪ — | ∪ — — x
*cum ventitabas quo puella **ducebat***

Catullus 8.4

The problem with the relationship is not simply with Catullus' mental faculties (*ducas*, l. 2), but with the fact that Lesbia *ducebat* “‘led the way,’ ... implying ... the entire submission of Catullus to her will.”¹⁶⁵ Putting *ducebat* in the final position accomplishes two things: first, it makes it clear that Lesbia's being in control is the crux of the problem; second, it continues to recall poem 5, primed for the reader by the *soles* of the previous line. The word *ducere* can also refer to accounting,¹⁶⁶ and the connections to poem 5 with its seemingly numberless (yet countable) kisses activate this meaning; at 8.4, the phrase *puella ducebat* implies that the whole time the pair were engaging in the multitude

¹⁶⁴ Greene 1995, pp. 80-81.

¹⁶⁵ Ellis 1889 [1876] *ad loc.*

¹⁶⁶ *L&S* sv. *duco*, II.B.4.

of kisses in poem 5, where the whole point was to lose track of the number, Lesbia was *counting*.

Catullus then tries to break out of the erotic frame of reference by using a line that also appears in the unquestionably vituperative poem 37:

amata tantum quantum amabitur nulla
Catullus 37.12 (= 8.5)¹⁶⁷

This too is associated with counting, however: the *ducentos sessores* whom Catullus threatens to irrumate. Again, Catullus is unclear on the number (*centum an ducenti*, 37.7), but Lesbia, presented as a prostitute, surely keeps a careful accounting (cf. 11.18: *tenet trecentos*).

Poem 5's use of solar imagery led into a *nox perpetua* (5.6), i.e., the sleep of death. Read together with poem 8, this lends *nec miser vive* (8.10), already isolated by sense-pause and caesura, more force:

_ _ _ _ | _ _ _ || _ | _ _ _ x
nec quae fugit sectare, nec miser vive,
Catullus 8.10

This self-referential connection to an erotic poem stresses that rather than *death* after the relationship with Lesbia is over, instead there is *life*; the sickness is curable, not fatal.

Passing over the emendation <*noli*> at the end of line 9, this is the first of a pair of line-end commands to Catullus, with *obdura* at the end of line 11 changing to the decisive and declarative *obdurat* at the end of line 12:

_ _ _ _ || _ _ || _ | _ _ _ x
sed obstinata mente perfer, obdura.

¹⁶⁷ The connection is still clear if *nobis* is read instead of *tantum* in poem 8.

◡ _ ◡ _ | ◡ || _ ◡ _ | ◡ _ _ x
vale puella, iam Catullus obdurat,
 Catullus 8.11-12

The sickness is broken and the mind (*mente*, isolated by 3rd- and 4th-foot caesurae in the exact middle of line 11) is settled, or so it seems. In fact, the cure has yet to take hold.

Catullus has difficulty assigning blame to Lesbia, instead blaming himself for failing to recognize the signs of ambivalence, clear from the negating words in the final metron (*nulla*, “no girl,” l. 5; *nolebat*, “she was unwilling,” l. 7; *invitam*, “unwilling,” l. 13; *nulla*, “not at all,” l. 14).¹⁶⁸ Even when the negation is itself negated (as in *nec puella nolebat*, l. 7) the placement of *nolebat* foregrounds it; this is hardly enthusiastic participation from Lesbia.¹⁶⁹ Along with these reminders, *fiēbant* at the end of line 6 stresses that *illa multa ... iocosa* are in the past (*iocosa* recalls *iocari* of 2.6).

In line 15, Catullus attempts to return the choliamb to its usual business of invective, but fails:

◡ _ ◡ _ | _ || _ ◡ _ | ◡ _ _ x
scelesta, vae te! quae tibi manet vita?
 Catullus 8.15

Not only is his first direct insult, *scelesta*, rather colorless, but it is at the beginning of the line rather than the end. In a more wholly abusive poem like 37 (see pp. 67-82 above), this would produce no difficulty, since the beginning of a stichic line is always emphatic. Here, since abuse is minimal, *scelesta*’s placement is as far as possible from where it would carry the most weight, and its weakness as an insult undercuts the attempt at

¹⁶⁸ This last *nulla* is adverbial (see Fordyce 1961 *ad loc.*), but to all appearances repeats the *nulla* of l. 5. Though a 15th-century emendation, one might add the *noli* of l. 9 to this list.

¹⁶⁹ The litotes *nec nolebat* is much weaker than the preceding *volebas*, and inferring that it means *volebat* is “wishful” thinking on Catullus’ part.

emphasis. In addition, the sense pause in the middle of the second foot breaks the flow. Catullus' attempt at insulting Lesbia is halting, but not in the place where the choliambic meter is *supposed* to be halting—the caesura after *vae te* produces the same effect.

Catullus attempts to recover with an iambic commonplace, the rhetorical question (cf. 52.1[=4], *quid moraris emori?*; 29.1, *quis hoc potest videre, quis potest pati?*). As discussed above (pp. 65-67), however, the rhetorical question is a more useful tactic in the politically-oriented iambic trimeter poems; in a choliambic poem, the strategy soon serves to highlight the fact that the situation is out of Catullus' hands.¹⁷⁰ *Quae tibi manet vita?* seems like a strong question, but the *vita* at line-end picks up on *vive* in line 10, addressed to Catullus. Is Catullus sure that he is addressing Lesbia and not himself? The questions soon go seriously wrong, as Lesbia herself becomes the subject from the second question of line 16 through the end of line 18:¹⁷¹

– – ∪ – | – || – ∪ – | ∪ – – x
quis nunc te adibit? cui videberis bella?
 – – ∪ – | – || – ∪ || – | ∪ – – x
quem nunc amabis? cuius esse diceris?
 – – ∪ – | – || – ∪ – | ∪ – – x
quem basiabis? cui labella mordebis?

Catullus 8.16-18

As Catullus constructs a tricolon of metrically equivalent questions, each half beginning with a pronoun, with the same substitutions in the first and third feet, he starts to repeat sounds as the questions get away from him. First, the halting but strong accusative *te* of

¹⁷⁰ Cf. poem 40, where the conceit is turned on its head as Ravidus by his actions flings himself onto Catullus' *iambi* voluntarily, paradoxically removing Catullus' own agency by demonstrating a lack of self-control (see Chapter Three).

¹⁷¹ Watson 2003 makes no mention of the meter of poem 8, but does note that Catullus' questions have an "increasing suggestiveness, even lubriciousness ... Catullus is carried away by his reminiscences" (p. 462, esp. n. 20). This suggests, as I argue, the failure of the iambic mode to dispel Catullus' erotic preoccupation with Lesbia's future amatory adventures.

line 15's *vae te* is swallowed into the verb in line 16. Then, as Lesbia becomes the subject of *videberis*, instead of emphasizing something negative about her in the final foot he instead acknowledges her beauty (*bella*). She will continue as the subject of *amabis*, *diceris*, *basiabis*, and *mordebis*; meanwhile, line 17's *cuius* is isolated in the exact middle of the line, the only time this happens after line 11's *mente*. Catullus' steadied mind is now fixed on his potential rival.¹⁷² The crux of the matter is that Catullus' girl, whom he often proprietarily calls *mea* outside this poem (2.1, 3.3-4, 5.1), is no longer his.¹⁷³ Catullus is distracted from hardening his heart by his desire for the answer: "**whose** will you be said to be?"

Line 18 demonstrates the triumph of the erotic over the iambic. Whereas in poem 37 rivals for Lesbia's affections were unmercifully attacked, in poem 8 the rival is a future cipher (*quem?*), nothing more than Catullus' own imagining, and remains unassailed. The word *basiabis* conjures up happier times, with the "kiss" poems, 5 & 7. With the final *mordebis*, recalling the playful bites of the sparrow at 2.4 (*et acris solet incitare morsus*), it seems that Lesbia takes over the physicality of the final metron, as she is the one doing the biting. Catullus' abortive attempt at biting invective cedes its place to Lesbia's imagined erotic nibbling.

The reader is left dubious at the effectiveness of Catullus' iambic inoculation against lovesickness. Ending the poem with *obdura* in the final metron of the poem suggests a serious endeavor to cure lovesickness by replacing the erotic with the iambic, as do the attempt at drawing from the more completely abusive poem 37 and, crucially,

¹⁷² See Greene 1995, pp. 83-84.

¹⁷³ Note that in poem 37, when the rivals are more identifiable, the *puella* is not considered anyone's.

the choice of meter. The efficacy of the entire venture, however, is brought into question by the repetitive language patterns and Catullus' inability to stop himself from incorporating erotic language from elsewhere in the corpus, when "bright suns shone" (*fulsere ... candidi ... soles*, ll. 3 & 8).

Catullus 31: Limping Home

*Paene insularum, Sirmio, insularumque
ocelle, quascumque in liquentibus stagnis
marique vasto fert uterque Neptunus,
quam te libenter quamque laetus invisio, 5
vix mi ipse credens Thyniam atque Bithynos
liquisse campos et videre te in tuto.
o quid solutis est beatius curis,
cum mens onus reponit, ac peregrino
labore fessi venimus larem ad nostrum,
desideratoque acquiescimus lecto? 10
hoc est quod unum est pro laboribus tantis.
salve, o venusta Sirmio, atque ero gaude
gaudente, vosque †Lydiae lacus undae
ridete quidquid est domi cachinnorum.*

Of peninsulas, Sirmio, and of islands
the bright eye, all that in liquid lakes
or vast ocean either Neptune bears:
how willingly and with what joy I revisit you,
scarcely trusting myself that I have left Thynia and the
Bithynian 5
plains, and that I see you in safety.
Ah, what is more blessed than to put cares away,
when the mind lays by its burden, and with far travel's
labor tired we have come to our own home
and rest on the couch we longed for? 10
This it is which alone is worth all these toils.
Welcome, lovely Sirmio, and rejoice in your master's

joy, and you, you waters of the Lydian lake,
 laugh out aloud all that you have in your home of jeers.
 Catullus 31¹⁷⁴

In poem 31, Catullus describes the joy of homecoming in choliambics. The poem fits in with the curative choliambic poems discussed above: the joy of return home, put in strikingly erotic terms, is presented as the only thing Catullus' time in a foreign land has repaid him with. This is *eros* as cure for *curae*, rather than their cause. His metrical choice is justified by implicit criticism of Bithynia, accomplished by means of a contrastive praise of Sirmio underscored by invective markers that link the poem to the iambic invective tradition. He accomplishes this by making connections with poem 4, another poem that concerns a trip from the East,¹⁷⁵ and also uses invective markers to maintain iambic continuity even as he takes *iambos* in a very different direction—confirming Timothy Johnson's suspicion that an iambic meter in poem 31, as in poem 4, recalls Catullus' disillusionment with his monetarily fruitless trip to Bithynia.¹⁷⁶

Connections with poem 4 are everywhere in poem 31; for example, the *erus* of the *phaselus* (*erum*, 4.19) is recalled by the *erus* of Sirmio (*ero*, 31.11); the *utrumque* *Iuppiter* of 4.20 is reflected in *uterque Neptunus* (31.3); and, though the reading in poem

¹⁷⁴ Text from Thomson 1997 [1978], except instead of *lucidae* (l. 13) I print *Lydiae* (following Kroll 1968 [1923], Fordyce 1961, and Quinn 1973 [1970] among others). Trappes-Lomax 2007, pp. 95-96, argues for *limpidi*. I have obelized the word as none of the three possibilities are necessarily incompatible with my reading of the poem as a whole, though *Lydiae* would bring up an association with Hipponax, who often uses Lydian loanwords (see pp. 126-127 below).

¹⁷⁵ I think it likely the same trip, despite some ambiguity on the point; Feeney 2012, p. 32, describes the *phaselus* of poem 4 as "a voluble Bithynian with vividly mimetic Greek turns of speech and prosody." See Putnam 1962 and Newman 1990, p. 184 on the link between the two poems. There is a similar link with poem 46, representing the beginning of the trip (cf. Putnam 1962 again and Thomson 1997 [1978], p. 284, though the latter questions a connection to poem 4: "Catullus here – and only here – if he is the speaker or is represented by the intermediary, and if the setting is Sirmio, leave[s] out all the names that could attach the poem to its occasion"). The primary concern of poem 4 is iambic poetry, so to me it is reasonable that identifying features are not a main concern.

¹⁷⁶ Johnson 2012, p. 48, n. 23.

31 is in dispute, it is attractive to read poem 4's *limpidum lacum* (l. 24) as the lake at Sirmio (†*limpidi lacus*, 31.13).¹⁷⁷ Much of what seems odd about c. 31 in isolation becomes clearer in connection with poem 4 (and 46). As part of a trilogy of journey-poems about the return from Bithynia, poem 31 represents the end, 4 the middle, and 46 the beginning, in three different meters. Poem 46, the departure/spring poem, is explicitly paired with 31 by Thomson: "the jaunty, lively hendecasyllables of the anticipatory spring poem are replaced by the weary 'limping iambs' that record the journey's end of the tired traveller."¹⁷⁸ Poem 4 then refers to the swift and uneventful trip home by sea; as I argue in Chapter One (pp. 19-62 above), the voyage is pregnant with the possibility of (iambic) disaster, but ultimately the *phaselus* sails by unscathed.

The slowed-down limping iambs of poem 31 reflect Catullus' arrival by foot at his Sirmian estate; by foot, because he logically cannot have sailed through the front door, and we are taken along with him all the way to bed (*lecto*, l. 10). Morgan points out "the discernible tendency of expressions denoting weakness or disability to migrate to the 'lame' or 'limping' cadence of the line."¹⁷⁹ Following Wilkinson, he extends this "weakness" to include Catullus' weariness.¹⁸⁰ In poem 4, whether the *phaselus* actually sails its master to Lake Garda is left ambiguous, but water in general is central to the

¹⁷⁷ See my note at the beginning of this section. The only other *lacus* mentioned by Catullus is the filthy one at Colonia (Verona) at 17.10. Geographically, the *lacus* of 17 cannot be the same as that of 31.13, and because of its inferior water quality it cannot be the same as that at 4.24. Even if *limpidi* is not the correct reading in poem 31, Lake Garda is still not unreasonable as the destination of the *phaselus* of poem 4.

¹⁷⁸ Thomson 1997 [1978], p. 284. Cairns 1972, pp. 44f. treats c. 46 primarily as a departure poem; Garofeanu 2008, pp. 79ff. treats it primarily as a spring poem.

¹⁷⁹ Morgan 2010b, p. 126.

¹⁸⁰ Morgan 2010b, p. 128, following Wilkinson 1963, p. 101. I will discuss Catullus' "encumbrances" below on pp. 130-132.

poem and is the medium by which the *phaselus* is able to travel freely.¹⁸¹ It is interesting then that in poem 31 the destination, on land, is literally central:

– – ∪ – | – || – ∪ || – | ∪ – – x
Paene insularum, Sirmio, insularumque
 ∪ – ∪ – | – || – ∪ – | ∪ – – x
ocelle, quascumque in liquentibus stagnis
 Catullus 31.1-2

The word *Sirmio* lies precisely between almost-islands and islands and between the 3rd- and 4th-foot caesurae in the very center of the first line (the effect is repeated in l. 12).¹⁸² Just as islands and almost-islands are surrounded by and thereby distinguished from the sea, so Sirmio with the islands and almost-islands. This bold isolation of Sirmio accomplishes two things: first, it sets the strategy for the rest of the poem, making Sirmio the focus while making everything else (*paene insularum ... insularumque*) peripheral and, by contrast, inferior; second, it calls immediate attention to the structure of the poem for the reader.

The genitive-vocative-genitive-vocative pattern only ends at the sense-pause in line 2. This sense-unit (*Paene insularum, Sirmio, insularumque / ocelle*) slips over the limping end of line 1. There is a more compact *sound*-unit, however, in line 1, with consonance of sibilants, liquids, and nasals in all but the first and last syllable (*Paene insularum, Sirmio, insularumque*). The final *–que* sound at the end of line 1 is the

¹⁸¹ In fact, it could be argued that none of the potential dangers originate in the water. Just as the *phaselus* itself comes from land, so too does any other ship that attacks with its *trabs* (l. 3); other obstacles include a variety of shores (*litus insulasve*, l. 7; *sinum*, l. 9) or to water made dangerous by its proximity to shore (*Thracia* in l. 8 refers to the winds from Thrace, according to Thomson 1997 [1978] *ad loc.*, and the *impotentia freta* of l. 18 are straits, narrow passages of water made dangerous by the lands which abut them).

¹⁸² In fact, the number of long and short syllables on either side of *Sirmi(o)* is the same in line 1 if the anaceps, effectively long, is counted as such.

beginning of a string of velar plosive sounds (-*que* / *ocelle*, *quascumque* in *liquentibus stagnis*).

I suggest that even though the sense-unit continues into the next line, potentially lessening the pounding of the choliamb (most effective when the line is end-stopped), the -*que* sound at the end of the line prevents this from happening. This sound calls attention to the word it is a part of at the end of the choliambic line; the resumption of a similar sound in *ocelle* in the very beginning of line 2 sets up an emphatic contrast. Sirmio is identified as the *ocelle*, the ‘jewel’ or (literally) the ‘eyelet’ (“a delicate word of endearment which also suggests a natural beauty spot”)¹⁸³ of that type of land of which it *is* a member (peninsulae) *and* of the type of which it is *not* (islands). The former are in the beginning of line 1, as is *ocelle* in line 2; the *insularumque* at the end. The *ocelle* is therefore kept far from the harshness of the choliambic line-end. The *insulae* are contrasted with Sirmio both by position and by geography. This may be a connection to the *insulas* ... *Cycladas* in line 7 of poem 4, which again were associated with the iambic poets Archilochus (of Paros and Thasos) and Semonides (of Amorgos).¹⁸⁴ Is it too much then to hope for a connection with Hipponax in a metrical form he supposedly invented? Sirmio is balanced between almost-islands and islands; so too was Clazomenae, where Hipponax went after he was exiled from Ephesus. Clazomenae had apparently been an island, but

¹⁸³ Morgan 2010b, p. 125. Quinn 1973 [1970] identifies *paene insularum* as “virtually a compound. (C. perhaps originated the combination).” *Ocelle* may also have an erotic character (Witke 1972, p. 241).

¹⁸⁴ The only other times Catullus uses the word *insulae* in the corpus are at 64.184, referring to Ariadne’s abandonment on another Cycladic isle, Naxos; and at 29.12, referring to Britain and insulting Caesar and his engineer Mamurra.

Ἀλέξανδρος ... ἀνὰ χρόνον ἔμελλεν ὁ Φιλίππου χερρόνησον Κλαζομενάς
ἐργάσασθαι χώματι ἐς τὴν νῆσον ἐκ τῆς ἡπείρου.

in the course of time Alexander the son of Philip was destined to make
Clazomenae a peninsula by a mole [*sc.* an earthen bridge] from the mainland to
the island.

Pausanias 7.3.9¹⁸⁵

It is an interesting coincidence, if nothing else, that both Catullus and Hipponax reach the
ends of their respective journeys at almost-islands.¹⁸⁶ Also, though the †*Lydiae ... undae*
of line 13 have been associated with local Etruscans, who were thought to have come
from Lydia,¹⁸⁷ during Hipponax's lifetime both Ephesus and Clazomenae were in the
Lydian sphere of influence, and his Greek is peppered with Lydian words and phrases.¹⁸⁸

The focus shifts to water with *stagnis* in the final position of 31.2. This puts the
English-speaking reader in mind of stagnation, but there is no particularly negative
connotation in Latin.¹⁸⁹ A *stagnum* is simply a pool of standing water, whether naturally
stationary like a lake or, tellingly, a pool formed from the overflowing of a river or
stream.¹⁹⁰ Thus an abundance of movement comes to rest as a *stagnum*, just as the
speaker of poem 31 comes to rest after an abundance of travel. In the following line,
however, the movement starts up again with an allusion to poem 4:

υ _ υ _ | _ || υ _ | υ _ _ x
marique vasto fert uterque Neptunus,
Catullus 31.3

¹⁸⁵ Text and translation from Jones 1933, pp. 184-185.

¹⁸⁶ From the Roman perspective, Clazomenae would have been a peninsula.

¹⁸⁷ See Fordyce 1961 *ad loc.*

¹⁸⁸ Ephesus came under direct Lydian control around 560 BCE, and the rest of Ionia soon followed (Hogarth 1929 [1925], pp. 517-520). Hipponax uses Lydian in addresses to the gods (fr. 3, 3a, 38, and 40W), in connection with the priest Cicon (fr. 4W), and as part of a magic spell (fr. 92W). Cf. also fr. 160W.

¹⁸⁹ As in English: *OED 2. fig.* Unhealthy absence of activity, energy, etc.

¹⁹⁰ *L&S* gives Livy 1.4.4, *super ripas Tiberis effusus lenibus stagnis*, as an example of the latter.

The first metron, *marique vas-*, speeds the meter up with two pure iambic feet, recalling poem 4 and the swift sailing over the sea. Not only does Catullus set up a distinction between fresh water and salt water, but the salt water seems to be in motion. The *uterque Neptunus* further distinguishes between fresh and salt water; one Neptune carries the islands or almost-islands *in liquentibus stagnis*, the other those *in mari vasto*. This dual god recalls poem 4, where *utrumque Iuppiter / simul secundus incidisset in pedem* (ll. 20-21). Whereas the iambic final metron of 4.20 (*-que Iuppiter*) represents the wind speeding the *phaselus* along, in poem 31 the three long syllables of *vasto fert* and *Neptunus* mirror the metrical pattern of line 2 (*quascumque in* and *-bus stagnis*) and likewise suggest that the water is coming to a stop.

Cairns draws attention to this interplay of contrastive doubles and meter: In the first five lines, Catullus “three times out of four places one of [a] pair at the end of a line, at the point where the ‘limping’ trochaic rhythm is found. Thus one of each pair is contrasted rhythmically with its complement, which occurs in the earlier iambic part of a line.”¹⁹¹ These pairs include the two already discussed, *paene insularum ... insularumque* (l. 1), *liquentibus stagnis / marique vasto* (ll. 2-3), but also *libenter ... laetus* (l. 4) and *Thyniam ... Bithynos* (l. 5).

These last two pairs of supposedly contrastive doubles are actually invective markers like those in poem 4, with their potentially negative meanings raised but quickly dispelled; they should instead be read jointly, together contrasting with other words: *quam te libenter quamque laetus* with *inviso* at the end of line 4, and *Thyniam atque*

¹⁹¹ Cairns 1974, p. 5.

Bithynos with *liquisse* at the beginning of line 6, respectively. The *libenter ... laetus* “pair” contrasts with the verb *inviso* (“I go to see”), which is the same as the fourth principle part of the verb *invideo*, “to cast the evil eye” (cf. poem 5.12), “to begrudge”; and, as an adjective (*invisus*, -a, -um), it means “hated.” *Inviso* is at the end of the choliambic line:

– – ∪ – | – || – ∪ – | ∪ – – x
quam te libenter quamque laetus invisio
 Catullus 31.4

This would be the appropriate place for it if it did actually mean “hated” here.

Grammatically, *inviso* could possibly go with *te* as an ablative absolute (“with you hated/hateful/having been envied”).¹⁹² An audience cued by the choliamb might well expect a vicious twist of some sort, but the invective never materializes, and *te*, referring to Sirmio, is kept almost at the very beginning of the line, far from *inviso*; the invective marker remains a lexical undertone. The same combination is also hinted at in line 6, with *videre te in* an anagram for *invidere te*, but here the word order precludes the possibility of invective.

Bithynos, at the end of line 5, is juxtaposed with *liquisse* at the beginning of line 6; this points to Catullus’ negative view of Bithynia and the joy he feels at having left it behind. Armstrong points to the importance of Bithynia as a canvas to set this joyfulness against: “the unappealing qualities of one landscape appear as retrospective aid to appreciating the joys of the other.”¹⁹³ Morgan takes a similar tack in seeing the

¹⁹² Until, of course, it becomes clear that the sentence would be missing its main verb. The hyperbaton may be too much, but the larger point remains.

¹⁹³ Armstrong 2013, p. 47. She does not discuss the meter of poem 31.

choliambic structure itself as providing “a dark underlying note of misery and distress, a lingering ‘iambic’ ground, in other words, against which the euphoria of Catullus’ homecoming stands out the more sharply.”¹⁹⁴ Though he does not discuss invective markers in the poem, the end of line 6 may contribute to this sense of unease: the phrase *in tuto* may recall its exact opposite, *intuto* (“unsafe, dangerous”).¹⁹⁵

Johnson interprets this “‘iambic’ ground” differently, suggesting that the iambic meters of poems 4 and 31, combined as they are with the theme of return from the East, are meant to recall the financial problems described in such graphic terms in poem 28 (*tota ista trabe lentus irrumasti*, l. 10).¹⁹⁶ This theory resonates nicely with the financial language of 31.11:

hoc est quod unum est pro laboribus tantis.
Catullus 31.11

Sirmio is not only the place to which Catullus returns, but that return is in itself the only “return” for his efforts in Bithynia.¹⁹⁷ As for those efforts, Morgan argues that the happiness Catullus feels at his return from Bithynia is contrasted with

the encumbrances—*Thyniam atque Bithynos, curis, onus, peregrino labore, laboribus tantis*—from which he has escaped. The choliambic form of this joyous outpouring provides [a] method of evoking the dystopic background of endurance and suffering against which the poem’s euphoria is clarified and magnified.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁴ Morgan 2010b, p. 150, n. 92. I feel that the invective markers are key to this reading of 31, however. Morgan also connects this “iambic ground” to poem 4, which “also ... looks back from a position of comfort,” and he points to certain “iambic qualities” (what I refer to as invective markers) in that poem.

¹⁹⁵ For *intutus*, -a, -um, cf. Sallust *Historiae* 1.48.17, L. Marcius Philippus’ reported speech against Lepidus (father of the triumvir). Admittedly, the word’s appearance in Sallust may tell against its being in common usage.

¹⁹⁶ Johnson 2012, p. 48, n. 23.

¹⁹⁷ So Armstrong 2013, p. 47: “The fact that Catullus’ time in Bithynia has left him with scant financial rewards is also, for once, expressed fairly positively.”

¹⁹⁸ Morgan 2010b, p. 128.

Morgan's list of encumbrances—except for *onus* (l. 8)—all sit (at least partially) in the final metron of the choliambic line:

_ _ ∪ _ | _ _ _ _ | _ _ _ x
o quid solutis est beatius curis,
 _ _ _ ∪ _ | ∪ _ ∪ _ | _ | ∪ _ _ x
cum mens onus reponit, ac peregrino
 ∪ _ ∪ _ | _ _ | _ ∪ _ _ _ x
labore fessi venimus larem ad nostrum,
 _ _ ∪ _ | _ _ _ _ | _ _ _ x
desideratoque acquiescimus lecto?
 ∪ _ _ ∪ _ | _ _ | _ _ | _ _ _ x
hoc est quod unum est pro laboribus tantis.

Catullus 31.7-11

There are some fascinating effects going on in this section of the poem. First of all, in line 7, *solutis* (“dissolved, released”) is separated from the encumbrance it modifies, *curis* (“worries, anxieties, cares”) by the caesura, so that the two words are kept in contrast with one another by the structure of the line. The following line works the same way, but the entire phrase *cum mens onus reponit* in front of the 4th-foot caesura should be taken as a unit; “when the mind puts down its burden” is on the side of *lightness*, not encumbrance, and is contrasted with *peregrino*. The word *onus* should be considered in this context.

The word *peregrino* goes with *labore* (l. 9), and the effect is much like that of 22.4-5 (*milia aut decem aut plura / perscripta*), where the words’ meaning mirrors their spilling over into the following line. In this case the idea of distance evoked by *peregrino* (“strange, foreign, that comes from foreign parts”) is mirrored by its estrangement from *labore* on the one hand, and *larem ad nostrum* on the other, with

which *peregrino* is “placed in emphatic opposition.”¹⁹⁹ The distance is bridged by Catullus’—and our own—wearied movement (*fessi venimus*).²⁰⁰

The shift in the use of the final metron to refer to Catullus’ arrival at home,²⁰¹ nowhere considered negatively, coincides with a grouping of erotic words; Catullus’ home at Sirmio is restorative, much like his *fundus* in poem 44 (see pp. 99-111). To Baker’s short list of words that recall in some way the language of poem 50 (*ocelle*, at 31.2 and 50.19;²⁰² *desiderato ... lecto*, 31.10 with *lectulo*, 50.15²⁰³) should be added *labore fessi*, 31.9 with *defessa labore*, 50.14.²⁰⁴ The echo of *labore* at the beginning of line 9 in *laboribus tantis* at the end of line 11 reflects the complicated feelings surrounding the entire venture.²⁰⁵ *Labor* is not inherently “bad” (cf. Catullus’ wariness of *otium* at 51.13-16), and the connections with poem 50 suggest taking it in an erotic sense.²⁰⁶ This erotic language leads into a joyful resumption of the direct address that began the poem, with yet another erotic word, *venusta*:²⁰⁷

*salve, o venusta Sirmio, atque ero gaude
gaudente, vosque †Lydiae lacus undae
ridete quidquid est domi cachinnorum.*

Catullus 31.12-14

¹⁹⁹ Fordyce 1961, *ad loc.*; cf. Thomson 1997 [1978], *ad loc.*

²⁰⁰ Again, see Syndikus 1984, p. 186 on the emotional effect of the switch to first person plural.

²⁰¹ Cf. Kroll 1968 [1923], *ad loc.*; and Quinn 1972, p. 158: “*venimus larem ad nostrum* can hardly mean anything else.”

²⁰² I suspect the erotic nature of *ocelle* is only activated by 31.9-10.

²⁰³ Perhaps *moreso* with *furore lecto*, 50.11.

²⁰⁴ Baker 1983, pp. 320-321. Cf. Holzberg 2004, pp. 103ff., who argues that there is a sexual subtext connecting poem 31 to poems 30 and 32.

²⁰⁵ Quinn 1973 [1970], *ad loc.*, rightly takes these *labores* to be those undertaken in Bithynia, not the travel itself.

²⁰⁶ Cf. Adams 1982, pp. 156-157.

²⁰⁷ For the erotic (and other) connotations of this word, see Krostenko 2001a, pp. 40-51.

As Witke suggests, putting “Sirmio and Catullus in close embrace reconstituting their *domus* ... exemplifies ... the value of *labor*.”²⁰⁸

Whereas in poem 8, erotic language was a symptom of a “disease,” lovesickness (see pp. 111-122 above), here it is restorative, the exact opposite. In fact, the only notable connection with any of the Lesbia poems is that line 10’s *desiderato* recalls *desiderio* at line 5 of poem 2, the first sparrow poem. In that context, Catullus wishes that by playing with the *passer*, he might be able to assuage his *curae*; the *desideratus lectus*, an erotically charged synecdoche for Sirmio as a whole, apparently succeeds where the sparrow—dead as it is in poem 3—fails.

There seems to be nothing but happiness expressed in lines 12-13: the command to “rejoice at your master / rejoicing” is clearly positive. Line 14, however, may contain a hint of mockery. Putnam writes that “the *cachinni* suggest the roar which waves make lapping against one another *when wind strikes the water*” (emphasis mine).²⁰⁹ This recalls one of the obstacles faced by the *phaselus* in poem 4 (*Thracia*, l. 8), which is also brought to mind by *ero* and *lacus* (*erum*, 4.19; *lacum*, 4.23). There is another connection to poem 4. Holzberg interprets the waves’ laughter as parodying the *pathos* of traditional homecoming poetry;²¹⁰ rather than ending with an invocation to land-based deities for his safe return, a step explicitly skipped in poem 4 (*neque ulla vota litoralibus deis / sibi esse facta, cum veniret a mari / novissime hunc ad usque limpidum lacum*, ll. 22-24), Catullus

²⁰⁸ Witke 1972, p. 249.

²⁰⁹ Putnam 1962, p. 13.

²¹⁰ Holzberg 2004, p. 102-103: “Der Schluß von c. 31 gibt einen Hinweis darauf, welche Leserreaktion der Autor sich vermutlich wünscht: Wir sollen in das Gekicher der Wellen einstimmen, die Aussage des Gedichtes also nicht ernst nehmen.”

has the personified *undae* laugh with (or perhaps at) his erotically-tinged reunion with Sirmio.²¹¹

Uden argues that the word *cachinnus*

demonstrate[s] that the kind of people who indulge in this kind of laughter tend to evince some kind of mean-spiritedness; it is always laughter *at* someone, often someone over whom you have power. When cruel Apronius drags in the old, honourable Roman *eques*, Quintus Lollius, to his dinner-party, and shouts insults at him while anointing himself and ordering more drinks, he *cachinnat*. In Catullus 56, Catullus commends to Cato the Priapic tale he will tell of having ‘struck down’ a boy (*pupulus*) in a *series triplex* by saying that it will be worthy of his listener’s *cachinnus*. ... This is exultant laughter, not a shared or inviting laughter between equals.²¹²

Lucilius uses it in the same mocking way:

*Si hic vestimenta elevit luto,
ab eo risum magnum inprudens ac cachinnum subicit.*

If he has fouled his clothes with dirt, from this he unwittingly prompts
great laughter and jeering.

Lucilius fr. 682-683²¹³

At 31.14, the *undae* are commanded to laugh (*ridete*) at the beginning of the line; as

Uden points out, “*cachinnare* is often contrasted with *ridere*, the non-marked form of the verb ‘to laugh.’” In this case, the contrast between *ridete* and *cachinnorum* is marked metrically by the placement of the latter at the very end of the choliambic line (and the poem).

Ending the poem on an invective marker not only serves as one last reminder for the reader of the choliamb’s original associations, but may suggest that Catullus intends

²¹¹ This may reflect the temporary nature of the erotic relief Sirmio provides; at some point, Catullus will return to Rome, and the consequences of the Bithynia trip arise again in poem 10.

²¹² James Uden, in an unpublished article on the word *cachinno* in Persius. The first example is from Cicero *In Verrem* 3.62, the second is at Catullus 56.2.

²¹³ Text and translation from Warmington 1967 [1938], pp. 218-219.

to return to explicit invective. Much of his datable invective does occur after his return from Bithynia (poem 29, for example, must take place between the conquest of Britain in 55 BCE and the death of Caesar's daughter Julia in 54).²¹⁴ Catullus is happy to be back, of course, but he is less overtly sanguine about his time in Bithynia when the subject arises in poems where the journey is less central (poems 10 and 28, both in hendecasyllables).²¹⁵ It might also be that Catullus ends on an invective marker meant specifically to mock himself for taking refuge in erotic language.²¹⁶

Through contrasts and juxtapositions, many of which are brought out specifically by poem 31's metrical structure, Catullus in praising Sirmio sets up a sort of negative-space invective of Bithynia, reinforced by lexical undertones of abuse. Erotic language tied into the personification of Sirmio presents Catullus' reunion with his home as a cure for his Bithynian troubles, precisely the opposite effect of erotic language in poem 8, where it served as a major part of the problem, painfully conjuring up a dead past.

Conclusion

In his abusive choliamb, Catullus confirms these associations, which his audience would have expected,²¹⁷ with the meter by using the final metron, set apart structurally by its final-foot trochee, for words associated with abuse, targets of said abuse, for contemptible actions, and other invective-linked words. This is in perfect

²¹⁴ Quinn 1973 [1970], pp. 175-176.

²¹⁵ In the former, he is forced to admit that he was unable to secure his own litter-bearers, and takes it out on Varus' girlfriend, whom he calls a *scortillum* and *insulsa*; in the latter, in commiserating with Veranius and Fabullus he recalls his irrumation by Memmius (see Tatum 2007 on the contrast between poems 28 and 29).

²¹⁶ See pp. 111-122 above.

²¹⁷ See Hooley 2007, p. 33; and Rotstein 2010, pp. 143-147 and *passim*.

accordance with Demetrius' theoretical conception of the choliamb as "unrhythmical, i.e., suitable for vigorous abuse."²¹⁸ In choliambic poems without that direct invective, Catullus repurposes this technique in order to engage in "diagnostic" activities, identifying and attempting to solve problems connected with literary criticism and/or Catullus' own emotional and physical health. In poem 22, Catullus presents himself as an arbiter of taste, in charge of deciding whether Suffenus' literary foibles are forgiveable. In poem 44, Catullus castigates himself for being overly concerned with how he is perceived, particularly with whether others see his estate as Sabine or Tiburtine, and his status-anxiety is likewise demonstrated by his willingness to read Sestius' frigid speech in order to gain a dinner invitation. In poem 8, Catullus attempts, ultimately without success, to set choliambic self-exhortations against his erotic reminiscences of his relationship with Lesbia. In a sense inverting the problems of poem 8, in poem 31 he presents himself as master of Sirmio (*ero*, l. 12), this time introducing erotic language on his own terms—but an undercurrent of mocking language recalls the choliamb's traditional abusive associations.

²¹⁸ Demetrius *On Style* 301 (= Hipponax T12).

Chapter Three. *Iambi and Amores: Catullus' Flexible*

Hendecasyllable

Introduction

Catullus' most-used meter in the polymetric section of the corpus (poems 1-60) is the hendecasyllable, a meter that, as Morgan argues, is generically ambiguous.¹ Catullus often uses hendecasyllables for traditionally iambic content, particularly invective (poems 6, 10, 12, 15, 16, 21, 23, 24, 26, 28, 33, 36, 40-43, 47, 49, 53, 54, 56, 57, 58a, and fr. 3), but also for poetry involving lyric themes of praise or love (1-3, 5-7, 9-10, 13, 14, 27, 32, 35, 38, 45, 46, 48, 50, 55, and 58b).² Catullus frequently and deliberately opens himself up to attack in his hendecasyllables when the erotic intersects with the iambic, often with either overt or covert literary implications.³ In this chapter, I show that by taking advantage of the opportunities provided by the hendecasyllable's inherent flexibility, Catullus is able to switch rapidly from the abusive to the erotic or laudatory (to the *lyric*, in other words), creating generic tension even within the confines of single poems.

When Catullus mixes the erotic with the iambic in his hendecasyllables, he often adopts a defensive and aggressive hypermasculine stance in order to counter attacks—some merely anticipated—with invective.⁴ Catullus mixes iambic and lyric qualities in

¹ Morgan 2010b, p. 86.

² Some of the poems listed as invective could just as easily be listed as love or praise poetry (or vice versa); this is, in part, my point. I group poem 27 with the lyric poems because of its sympotic content, and poem 38 mentions the lyric poet Simonides by name.

³ Cf. Chapter Two's discussion of poem 8 (pp. 111-122 above), where the choliambic meter is chosen in an attempt to fight off the erotic infection of lovesickness.

⁴ For performance of masculinity in Catullus, see Newman 1990, Selden 1992, Fitzgerald 1995, Greene 1998, Krostenko 2001a, Wray 2001, and Manwell 2007. For ancient masculinity generally, see Masterson 2014 with further references.

order to explore his own (and his friends') vulnerability to detractors and/or the nobility, often in explicitly sexual terms.⁵ He thereby reveals the gaps between his own masculine self-construction and the Roman ideal of manhood—laying bare that ideal's inherent vulnerability⁶—with the generic flexibility of the hendecasyllable. When Catullus portrays himself as under attack, his masculinity impugned, often both his aggressive reaction to criticism and the weakness targeted by that criticism are reflected in or manifest as generic tensions within particular poems. To this end, Catullus tends to assign his verses physical characteristics, transforming them into weapons or even giving them human traits, particularly when he uses the words *hendecasyllabi* or *iambi*; in view of this fact, I suggest a similar metapoetic usage for the word *amores* in Catullus' hendecasyllables.

This overaggressive stance also neatly fits the traditional perception that Archilochus and the other Archaic iambicists were (perhaps too) willing to reveal their own vulnerabilities in their poetry. For the speaker to betray some personal flaw is not atypical in *iambos*; consider for example Critias' contention that Archilochus would have done better not to reveal himself as the son of a slave, or to have thrown away his shield.⁷ In Archilochus' poetry, there are many erotic fragments, and he explicitly presents

⁵ See Tatum 2007 and Rawles & Natoli 2014, pp. 342-345.

⁶ See Skinner 1993b for the connections between Catullus' portrayal of gender and political impotence for most elite males in the latter days of the Republic.

⁷ A (deliberately?) literal reading of Archilochus' claim to be the "son of Blame" (Critias 88 B 44 *DK* = Archilochus 295W = Archilochus T33 in Gerber 1999); see the discussion in Rosen 2007, pp. 248-251. Archilochus throws away his shield in fr. 5W, though this is in elegiac couplets. The danger of revealing such vulnerabilities when attacking others is also a grave concern in Roman oratory; see Tatum 2007, p. 336.

himself (or an interlocutor)⁸ as practiced in more modes than just invective (e.g., the dithyramb and the paean, frs. 120 & 121W).⁹ As Heyworth contends, Catullus in his hendecasyllables resurrects much of the sheer thematic variety of Archilochus' iambic corpus, which included more than just invective content.¹⁰ I argue that this is possible precisely because of the hendecasyllable's flexibility; iambic meters had become closely tied to invective content by Catullus' time,¹¹ but hendecasyllables have no strong character.¹²

The erotic/lyric and iambic modes in Catullus also neatly reflect the dipole characterization of Roman masculinity as *mollis* or *durus*.¹³ In Wray's formulation, Catullus performs his poetry in two separate modes: an Archilochean, aggressively masculine mode, and a Callimachean, more cultured and feminine mode.¹⁴ For Manwell, Roman manhood "was an achieved state, not one automatically conferred, since men had to prove their virility and might well lose it."¹⁵ I argue that Catullus constructs a more complete and fully integrated masculinity in his hendecasyllables, but also one that acknowledges that masculinity's fluidity. Catullus' facility in slipping from one generic mode to another is complementary to the ease with which gender slippage away from the

⁸ Due to the fragmentary nature of the corpus, in many cases it is difficult to say whether Archilochus is speaking in his "own" voice or in a different persona.

⁹ Cf. fr. 1W, where (in elegiac couplets) Archilochus presents himself as both warrior and poet.

¹⁰ Heyworth 2001.

¹¹ See Rotstein 2010 as well as Chapters One and Two (pp. 19-136 above).

¹² Although from the point of view of later authors, their character is *Catullan*.

¹³ For the *vir durus* and the *mollis mas*, see Manwell 2007, pp. 113ff.

¹⁴ Wray 2001. Catullus' poetry is thus meant to exhibit his agonistic excellence in either mode.

¹⁵ Manwell 2007, p. 114. Therefore, insofar as poetic "performance" is a mirror to (or part and parcel of) social performance (for which see especially Krostenko 2001a), it reflects lived experience. Catullus' hendecasyllables in particular approach a more complete picture precisely because they can employ multiple generic modes. Lavigne 2005, p. 144, argues that all iambic poets engage in a defense of their masculinity against some perceived challenge (cf. Hawkins 2014, p. 23, on this stance in post-Horatian poets and prose authors.)

ideal can occur. When this happens, Catullus tends to purposefully *overcorrect*; his employment of a vicious defensive posture is actually a problematization of that posture's necessity, as it draws attention to the very weakness he denies.

Hendecasyllables and Genre

The generic ambiguity of the hendecasyllable is almost a given, as is its connection with *iambos*. Heyworth demonstrates many points of contact between Catullus' hendecasyllables and the Archaic iambic corpus, including *iambos*' dominant feature, invective.¹⁶ Catullus himself only uses the word *iambi* in hendecasyllabic poems (at 36.5, 40.2, 54.6, and fr. 3), and in at least some of those instances, the most likely referent is the poem in which it appears. This implies that Catullus' conception of *iambi* is not limited to poems in traditional iambic meters.

There are a few different reasons Catullus might have considered hendecasyllables to be, crucially, *partial* iambic meters. Morgan, arguing from metricians' varied conceptions of the meter (particularly Caesius Bassus, Varro, and Hephaestion), asserts "the *negotiability* of the hendecasyllable, the scope there was to claim a kinship with an enormous range of metrical traditions."¹⁷ The modern division of the hendecasyllable is a glyconic with a syncopated iambic metron (West's *gly* + *ia*):¹⁸

◦◦ – ◡◡ – ◡◡ – / ◡ – x¹⁹

¹⁶ Heyworth 2001.

¹⁷ Morgan 2010b, p. 86, citing in particular "Bassus' discussion of the metre," which "yield[s] three dominant theories of origin ... the Sapphic, ionic, and iambic."

¹⁸ West 1982.

¹⁹ I use " / " rather than " | " or " || " to distinguish this sort of division from divisions by metron and from caesurae.

Bassus alone theorized seven different divisions; the sheer number speaks to the meter's ambiguous status.²⁰

In terms of usage Catullus very often has a word break after the sixth syllable or, less commonly, the fifth (there is no fixed caesura in the hendecasyllable),²¹ just after or splitting the second half of the choriamb (– ∪ ∪ –). As I demonstrate below (pp. 143-148), Catullus often exploits this flexibility in designating an iambic second half of the line that is distinct in some way from the first half. Where the break is according to different theories is ultimately immaterial; suffice to say that the hendecasyllabic line ends in a catalectic iambic rhythm.

Another possible reason for Catullus to have considered hendecasyllables to be *iambi* is Callimachus' *Iamboi*. Newman argues that the *Iamboi* were known to Catullus, and that the four lyric poems following *Iambos* 13 in the papyrus fragments were not originally considered part of a separate work.²² These poems are separated out by Pfeiffer because they are in lyric meters, and the first (fr. 226) is in hendecasyllables.²³ However, there is nothing in the papyrus to indicate a separation, which "is why [Pfeiffer] prints the title as [MEAH?]."²⁴ In other words, Catullus probably had access to

²⁰ For a fuller discussion of the various divisions theorized by the metricians, see Morgan 2010b, pp. 79-84.

²¹ Califf 2002, p. 166.

²² Newman 1990, p. 49.

²³ Pfeiffer 1965 [1949], p. 216.

²⁴ Newman 1990, p. 49, n. 19. In his translation of Callimachus' poems, Nisetich adds other reasons for printing the four lyric poems as *Iambi* 14-17: that his use of lyric meters is "in so unlyric a manner that it seems a mistake to identify him as a lyric poet," and that there is a thematic connection between the iambic and lyric poems culminating in the apotheosis of Arsinoë in poem 16 (Nisetich 2001, p. xxiv and pp. xlv-xlv, respectively). The latter passage: "Callimachus had addressed the living queen at the end of *Aitia* 2, just before announcing that he would next cultivate poetry of a humbler sort [the *Iamboi*]. ... Arsinoë would not live to read them. ... [T]he lower form of poetry that he had told the living queen to expect from him

a work titled *Iamboi* which included hendecasyllables and was written by Callimachus, a major influence on Catullan poetics. This would appear to lend Callimachean support to an “iambic” hendecasyllable.²⁵

Considering hendecasyllables *partially* but not *exclusively* iambic meters allows Catullus to use them for erotic poetry as well, among other lyric themes. This establishes links to another of Catullus’ named Greek models, Sappho. Sappho’s fifth book as arranged by the Alexandrians, though varied in meter much like Catullus’ polymetric poems (1-60), includes many hendecasyllables.²⁶ In addition to the fact that the pseudonym Lesbia is clearly designed to evoke Sappho, the connection is all the stronger because of the number of hendecasyllables (at least eight poems) Catullus writes about his affair with Lesbia.²⁷

I will discuss below primarily those hendecasyllabic poems in which Catullus mentions *iambi* (36, 40, 54, and fr. 3) and *hendecasyllabi* (42 and 12) by name, all of which involve invective and present their generic/metrical terms as people or weapons. Poems 54, fr. 3, 42, and 12 all demonstrate effortless metrical flexibility along the axis of (lyric) praise and (iambic) blame; poems 36 and 40, however, shift towards interactions

took wing, partly in response to her death, and flew to heights it had never visited before.” *Iambos* 16 in particular is a praise poem; though this would seem to be stretching the definition of *iambos* to the breaking point, there did exist a definition of *iambos* that included praise poetry (Proclus *ap.* Photius, *Chrestomathia* 319b20ff.), a definition that may have been Hellenistic in origin.

²⁵ A minor point: the beginning of Pindar’s ninth *Olympian Ode* (ll. 1-4) asserts that Archilochus himself, the prototypical blame poet, engaged in praise poetry, with his μέλος ... καλλίνικος ὁ τριπλόος κεχλαδώς (“exultant threefold beautifully-triumphant song”). This links blame with praise in a poet who is beyond doubt an influence on Catullus, and though it does not link the combination with the hendecasyllable, nonetheless the hendecasyllable is well-suited to link these disparate functions.

²⁶ For the Alexandrian arrangement of Sappho’s works, see Acosta-Hughes 2010, pp. 92-104.

²⁷ With fair to absolute certainty, poems 2, 3, 5, 7, 13, 36, 43, and 58a refer to Lesbia in hendecasyllables. Poem 35 involves a *Sapphica puella / musa doctior* (“a girl more learned than the Sapphic muse,” ll. 16-17. Cf. also the poems in Sapphics, 11 and 51.

between blame and the erotic, rather than praise (though both are lyric). With these factors in mind, I make a case for reading the plural *amores* in the hendecasyllables as not only referring to “a lover” but also as an allusion to erotic poetry. Throughout, I show that lyric (and especially erotic) themes in the hendecasyllables open Catullus up for attacks impugning his manhood from detractors (such as Furius and Aurelius in poem 16); Catullus counters these attacks with “iambic” invective targeting his detractors’ manhood in turn.

Poems 36, 40, 54, and fr. 3: “Iambi” in Hendecasyllables

Catullus only uses the term *iambi* in hendecasyllabic poems (poems 36, 40, 54, and fr. 3). Arguments over the word normally revolve around whether or not it refers specifically to other poems in exclusively iambic meters rather than the poems in which it appears.²⁸ I suggest that they can be self-referential, but need not be; either way, the placement of the word *iambi* activates an abusive/iambic mode; it is noteworthy that nowhere in Catullus’ wholly iambic poems does he refer to them as *iambi*. This in turn suggests that the hendecasyllables’ status as *iambi*, requiring as it does an explicit statement of that status, is particularly vulnerable. This vulnerability extends to Catullus’ own masculinity when he allows the iambic and erotic to intersect.²⁹

²⁸ Cf. Thomson 1997 [1978], pp. 296-297, who argues that they all refer to other poems; Newman 1990, pp. 48-49, who argues the opposite. Heyworth 2001, pp. 125-130, is less decisive, but leans towards Newman’s view.

²⁹ This will become clear below, particularly in Catullus’ choice to write poem 16 in hendecasyllables rather than in a wholly iambic meter (see pp. 168-181 below).

In all four poems, the word *iambi* appears at the end of the line, the part of the hendecasyllabic line with an iambic rhythm:³⁰

— — — ∪ / ∪ — ∪ — — x
desissemque truces vibrare iambos
 Catullus 36.5

∪ — — ∪ ∪ — / ∪ — — x
agit praecipitem in meos iambos?
 Catullus 40.2

— — — ∪ ∪ — / ∪ — — x
irascere iterum meis iambis
 Catullus 54.6

— — — ∪ — / ∪ — — x
at non effugies meos iambos
 Catullus fr. 3

In context, all of these phrases conceive of the *iambi* physically, either as weapons (poem 36 and fr. 3), people (poem 54), or either (poem 40).

This weaponry imagery taps into a long tradition connecting the origins of the word *iambos* to words like ἰὼν (arrow) or ἰάπτειν (to throw).³¹ In fr. 3 (only a single line remains), the *iambi* themselves are in active pursuit of their target and are the cause of his(?) flight. The fragment recalls poem 116.7-8: *contra nos tela ista tua evitabimus acta, / at fixus nostris tu dabis supplicium* (“we will evade those weapons of yours driven against us / but pierced by ours you will pay the price”), and thus implies that the *iambi*

³⁰ Cf. Morgan 2010b, p. 88, n. 107. Morgan divides 36.5 after *truces*, but the word is itself an iamb, means “fierce,” and modifies *iambos*. Since there is no fixed caesura, *truces* makes better sense as part of the iambic side (though admittedly it is after the fourth syllable). That way, only the verb describing the cessation of iambic activity is metrically uniambic.

³¹ For conceptions of *iambi* as both speedy and aggressive, see Chapter One, pp. 19-62 above.

are meant as *tela*.³² Poem 36 (discussed further below, pp. 149-154) uses similar imagery, further clarified by *vibrare* (“to brandish,” “to dart”):

*vovit, si sibi restitutus essem
desissemque truces vibrare iambos
electissima pessimi poetae
scripta ...*

she vowed that if I were restored to her love
and ceased to dart fierce iambs,
she would [burn] the choicest writings of the worst
of poets

5

Catullus 36.4-7

Here Lesbia misreads the situation. Her prayer makes two incorrect assumptions: that she and Catullus have the same *electissima pessimi poetae scripta* in mind, and that she has control over Catullus in their erotic relationship.³³ This is one poem where there can be little question that the *iambi* under discussion are not self-referential. Whichever *iambi* annoyed Lesbia in the first place, prompting her vow, they are already loosed and out of Catullus’ control, prompting the ingenious offer of Volusius’ *Annales* as a replacement.³⁴ This is a clever substitute; since there is as far as we know no connection between Volusius and Lesbia, she has no vested interest in protecting his poems; thus Catullus can deflect the vow onto a third party and defuse/diffuse the situation that rendered his poetry vulnerable.³⁵

³² It is not outside the realm of possibility, however, that the *iambi* are envisioned as soldiers with Catullus as their commander; cf. poem 40 below.

³³ This last assumption is not unreasonable, and is proved manifestly true in other poems (8, 76, and 85, for example).

³⁴ Is it that Lesbia wants the iambic poems already loosed to be brought under control, or that she wants no new attacks written? The fact that she intends to burn them as part of her vow suggests at least the former, though perhaps both are true.

³⁵ The substitution also leaves Catullus’ masculinity unscathed. Nowhere in the Catullan corpus is Volusius ever given any opportunity to attack him, and the biggest threat to his manhood—Lesbia herself—nonetheless has her vow fulfilled, and so is presented as having no reason to complain.

In poem 40, Catullus stretches the metaphor further, giving the *iambi* more agency and minimizing the sense that he has direct control over them, so that they seem as much spearmen as spears:³⁶

*Quaenam te mala mens, miselle Raude,
agit praecipitem in meos iambos?
quis deus tibi non bene advocatus
vecordem parat excitare rixam?
an ut pervenias in ora vulgi? 5
quid vis? qualubet esse notus optas?
eris, quandoquidem meos amores
cum longa voluisti amare poena.*

What infatuation, my poor Ravidus,
drives you headlong in the way of my iambs?
What god invoked by you amiss
is going to stir up a senseless quarrel?
Is it that you wish to be talked about? 5
What do you want? would you be known, no matter how?
So you shall, since you have chosen to love my lover,—
with a long punishment.

Catullus 40

Catullus turns the *iambi*-as-weapons trope on its head by making them stationary. The target, Ravidus, hurls himself headlong into the *iambi*, which act like a defensive palisade or army of spearmen. Ravidus' *mala mens* forces him into an ill-advised attack on a heavily fortified position, and Catullus takes no direct action in this poem. The *iambi*, undoubtedly self-referential here, will do all the work. Echoes of Archilochus point to the intended outcome:

πάτερ Λυκάμβα, ποῖον ἐφράσω τόδε;
τίς σὰς παρήειρε φρένας

³⁶ This mirrors the twin functions of poem 42's *hendecasyllabi*, which serve as both messenger and message (see pp. 154-168 below).

ἦς τό πρὶν ἡρήρησθα; νῦν δὲ δὴ πολὺς
ἀστοῖσι φαίνεαι γέλως.

Father Lycambes, what's this you've contrived? Who unhinged those wits
of yours which were screwed tight before? Now you really seem a big
joke to the townspeople.

Archilochus fr. 172W

Archilochus' verses supposedly drove Lycambes to suicide; in poem 40, Ravidus
commits metaphorical suicide by throwing himself onto Catullus' *iambi*, and likewise
ends up notorious (*in ora vulgi* and *notus*, ll. 5-6). There is a lack of agency on Catullus'
part in poem 40, however, that distinguishes it from Archilochus' poem and calls into
question the invulnerability of Catullus' masculinity; this allows a malicious misreading
of the poem's generic flexibility (see pp. 168-181 below).

In poem 54, the *iambi* are given a curious attribute:

*Othonis caput oppido est pusillum;
at, mi Rustice, semilauta crura,
subtile et leve peditum, Libonis,
si non omnia, displicere vellem
tibi et Sufficio seni recocto. 5
irascere iterum meis iambis
inmerentibus, unice imperator.*

Otho's bean (it's so tiny he's a pinhead),
legs, my Rusticus, never fully washed, and
Libo's smooth and crafty crepitations—
these at least, I would hope, will irritate both
you and Sufficius, that warmed-up old man ... 5
Going to lose your cool again because of
my oh-so-innocent iambics, one and only general?
Catullus 54³⁷

³⁷ Text from Thomson 1997 [1978], but combined into a single poem rather than split into two after line 5. The poem is very corrupt, but singles out (presumably) associates of Caesar as worthless, making fun of them for physical features as was quite common in Roman rhetoric. Cf. Craig 2004, pp. 190-192, who lists invective *loci* found in Cicero *In Pisonem* and in the *Second Philippic*. Translation adapted from Green 2005.

The *iambi* are *innerentes*, “undeserving” or, as Quinn puts it, “harmless” or “innocent.”³⁸

This attribute serves to personify the *iambi*, and its placement as an enjambed paraprodokian at the beginning of the hendecasyllabic line appropriately keeps it away from the iambic line end, separated from Caesar (the *unicus imperator*) by a caesura:

_ _ _ ∪ ∪ _ / ∪ _ ∪ _ x
irascere iterum meis iambis
 _ ∪ _ ∪ ∪ || _ ∪ _ ∪ _ x
innerentibus, unice imperator.
 54.6-7

The idea that *iambi*, the prototypical poetry of blame, could be blameless is at once surprising and perfectly reasonable. There is usually a sense that iambic poetry is meant to correct injustices in a defense of traditional social norms (for example, when Archilochus attacks Lycambes, it is because Lycambes has broken a vow to marry his daughter Neoboule to Archilochus; there is a vested societal interest in discouraging oathbreaking). In view of this tradition, Catullus is treating his *iambi* as a public service, exposing the corruption of the politically powerful.³⁹ Additionally, the seeming oxymoron underscores the generic flexibility of the hendecasyllable. If there is any time that *iambi* can be blameless, it is in hendecasyllables.

³⁸ Quinn 1973 [1970], *ad loc.* He stresses that they are in fact *mock*-innocent.

³⁹ There also may be a metrical connection to Mamurra. Goldberg 2005, pp. 107-110 suggests a division of the hendecasyllable after the fifth syllable, isolating an ithyphallic at the end of the line:

°° _ ∪ / _ ∪ _ ∪ _ _
 (ithyphallic)

Morgan finds his argument unconvincing (2010b, p. 85, n. 99), but the sense pause in line 7 isolates *unice imperator*, which would fall in the posited ithyphallic. This same phrase appears swapped (as *imperator unice*) at 29.11. Poem 29 specifically attacked Mamurra, whom Catullus calls *vestra ... mentula* (“your [Caesar’s & Pompey’s] prick,” 29.13), and poem 57 connects Caesar and Mamurra as twins (*gemelli utrique*, 57.6). It is possible that Catullus is making a metrical joke about their equivalence (Caesar’s prick/Caesar-as-prick).

Poem 36: Iambic Lyric, Iambic Hymn

Of the four poems in which *iambi* are mentioned, only 36 and 40 reveal any vulnerability on Catullus' part, in both cases specifically where the iambic and the erotic come into contact. Catullus' response in poem 36, however, masterfully deflects his own vulnerability onto the hapless Volusius; poem 40 is ultimately less successful, concerned as it is with an amatory rival, a direct threat to Catullus' manhood (see pp. 168-181 below). In poem 36, Catullus saves his *iambi* from Lesbia's vow to burn them:

<i>Annales Volusi, cacata carta,</i>	
<i>votum solvite pro mea puella.</i>	
<i>nam sanctae Veneri Cupidinique</i>	
<i>vovit, si sibi restitutus essem</i>	
<i>desissemque truces vibrare iambos,</i>	5
<i>electissima pessimi poetae</i>	
<i>scripta tardipedi deo daturam</i>	
<i>infelicibus ustulanda lignis,</i>	
<i>et hoc pessima se puella vidit</i>	
<i>iocose lepide vovere divis.</i>	10
<i>nunc, o caeruleo creata ponto,</i>	
<i>quae sanctum Idalium Uriosque apertos</i>	
<i>quaeque Ancona Cnidumque harundinosam</i>	
<i>colis quaeque Amathunta quaeque Golgos</i>	
<i>quaeque Dyrrachium Hadriae tabernam,</i>	15
<i>acceptum face redditumque votum,</i>	
<i>si non illepidum neque invenustum est.</i>	
<i>at vos interea venite in ignem,</i>	
<i>pleni ruris et inficetiarum</i>	
<i>annales Volusi, cacata carta.</i>	20

Chronicle of Volusius, shitted sheets,	
discharge a vow on behalf of my love;	
for to holy Venus and to Cupid	
she vowed that if I were restored to her love	
and ceased to dart fierce iambics,	5
she would give the choicest writings of the worst	
of poets to the lame-footed god,	

to be burnt with wood from some accursed tree:
 and my lady perceived that these were the worst poems
 that she was vowing to the gods in a witty jest. 10
 Now therefore, O thou whom the blue sea bore,
 who inhabitest holy Idalium and open Urii,
 who dwellest in Ancona and reedy Cnidus
 and in Amathus and in Golgi,
 and in Dyrrachium the tavern of the Adriatic, 15
 record the vow as received and duly paid,
 so surely as it is not out of taste nor inelegant.
 But meanwhile, into the fire with you,
 you bundle of rusticity and clumsiness,
 chronicle of Volusius, shitted sheets! 20
 Catullus 36

Lesbia thinks that she has control of Catullus' poetry because of her erotic hold on
 Catullus, and Catullus gives his audience some reason to think that this is in fact the case.
 The phrases *mea puella* and *Veneri Cupidinique* (36.2-3) recall more solidly erotic poems
 in hendecasyllables, such as the *passer* poems (2 & 3) and the *unguentum* poem (13).⁴⁰
 The first four lines give the impression that Volusius' *Annals* will actually fulfill Lesbia's
 vow *at her request*. Catullus not only reasserts his *iambi* by naming them at the end of
 line 5 and by repeating the first line at the very end of the poem, but (as it turns out) by
 hijacking Lesbia's vow, turning it into a mockery of a hymn (ll. 11-17).⁴¹

Performing a hymn in hendecasyllables is a perfect example of the meter's
 generic flexibility—particularly since it is a mockery of a hymn.⁴² Wray notes that the

⁴⁰ *Passer, deliciae meae puellae*, 2.1 (= 3.4); *lugete, o Veneres Cupidinesque*, 3.1; *passer mortuus est meae puellae*, 3.3; *tua nunc opera meae puellae*, 3.17; *nam unguentum dabo, quod meae puellae / donarunt Veneres Cupidinesque*, 13.11-12.

⁴¹ Cf. Syndikus 1984, pp. 207-209. Morgan 2010b, p. 91 argues that the poem is a clash between the epic-hymnic and iambic genres: "the title of Volusius' epic poem falls precisely, and properly, into the dactylic colon, the hemiepes or first two-and-a-half feet of a dactylic hexameter. The brutal exposure of the work that follows, involving a thoroughly iambic identification of Volusius' poetic activity with the most disgusting of physical activities, sits equally 'properly' in the colon that Bassus defines as iambic."

⁴² For a mock-hymn in choliambics, see Chapter Two on poem 44 (pp. 99-111 above).

bring water to Deo not from every source
but where it bubbles up pure and undefiled
from a holy spring, its very essence.'

Callimachus *Hymn* 2.108-112⁴⁶

The overstuffed hymn in poem 36 manages to mock the type of epic that Volusius (presumably) writes without *being* that type of epic; after all, there are still plenty of signs of careful craft.⁴⁷ Catullus has, as best he can, made the swift and short hendecasyllabic meter *drag*.⁴⁸ The thin stream of the slender hendecasyllabic line is polluted with the bloated hymn, which physically extends far beyond the other lines in the poem when it is written out on the page, and which is overstuffed with *c-* and *qu-* sounds, recalling the first line's *cacata carta*.

As for Lesbia, commentators have pointed out that Dyrrachium is not a cult site for Aphrodite or Venus, but instead was known for its thriving sex trade.⁴⁹ When juxtaposed with the following line's *acceptum face redditumque votum* ("enter the vow as received and paid back," l. 16) we have an allusion to the erotic nature of Catullus and Lesbia's relationship. Without any change to the meter, *colis ... acceptum face redditumque votum* could be translated as "you [*sc.* Venus] cherish ... the vow received and repaid by the torch" (*fax* can refer to a marriage torch, the fire of passion, or Cupid's torch). The fire imagery earlier in the poem (*tardipedi deo*, l. 7; *ustulanda lignis*, l. 8)

⁴⁶ Text from Mair 1955 [1921], p. 58; translation from Nisetich 2001, p. 27.

⁴⁷ Wray 2001 points out, e.g., "the perfect distribution of two place names per line, and the main verb ... lodged like a pearl at the opening of the third verse, the inventory's precise midpoint" (p. 77). Note also the shortening of the final syllable of *Ancona* before the (Greek) *Cnidum* in line 13 (see Housman 1928, pp. 5-6); in a Greek name *cn-* allows this where Latin does not. (Compare the lengthening of the final syllables of *propontida* and *impotentia* in poem 4.)

⁴⁸ See Chapter One, particularly on the *Sulpiciae conquestio*, which identifies the hendecasyllable as a "running" meter (pp. 30-39 above).

⁴⁹ See Thomson 1997 [1978], p. 297.

cues this association for the reader, an association further strengthened by *neque invenustum* (at its most literal, “nor without Venus”) and *ignem*:

– – – ∪ ∪ – – ∪ – – ∪ – – X
si non illepidum neque invenustum est.
 – – – ∪ ∪ – – ∪ – – ∪ – – X
at vos interea venite in ignem,
 36.17-18

The words *-venustum est* and *in ignem* fall at the same metrical *sedes*, and the repetition of sounds (*-ven-/ven-* and the elided *-e in-/e in*) further cements the link.

The hymn in 36 ends with the prostitution-heavy *Dyrrachium Hadriae tabernam* (“Dyrrachium, tavern of the Adriatic,” l. 15); in poem 37, Lesbia is closely associated with another *taberna* (l. 1), at which she *consedit*, sets up shop as a prostitute (l. 14).⁵⁰ Poem 37 then may be the *truces ... iambos* (36.5) about which Lesbia makes her vow,⁵¹ or else may be the fulfillment of their implied threat: the *tardipedi* god, Vulcan, could be a veiled reference to the “limping” iambic meter of poem 37. Either way, the inclusion of Dyrrachium in the hymn punctures the hymn’s pretensions. Catullus deflects any potential vulnerabilities in poem 36 on to Volusius. He protects his *iambi* from physical destruction by substituting Volusius’ *Annales*, which he mocks and attacks in the same poem, and he may even encode a subtle attack on Lesbia in his mocking hymn to Venus, which at the least mocks her own vow’s seriousness. So Wray:

Pessima puella ... now seems to signify in both senses [*sc.* performatively and ethically]. Lesbia’s nasty attempt at wit (nasty to Catullus, that is), of which she was proud, has been shown up by Catullus to be just as lacking in taste as her literary judgment. ... There is even an implicit threat: if Lesbia persists witlessly

⁵⁰ See Chapter Two on poem 37 (pp. 67-82 above). See also Herescu 1959 and 1960, and Skinner 1991, pp. 6-7.

⁵¹ So Fordyce 1961, p. 179.

in a war of wits with Catullus, he always has his sharp iambs at hand to hurl in her direction.⁵²

Whereas the erotic (see pp. 168-181 below) tends to bring out Catullus' vulnerability, here he presents himself in control—"a hypermasculine, aggressive mastery"⁵³—by deflecting and correcting Lesbia's pretensions to literary criticism with a hymnic mockery of Volusius. This incidentally may explain why Lesbia goes unnamed in this poem; the pseudonym (with its connection to the poet Sappho) implies literary taste, but in poem 36 she has proven herself lacking in that sphere. Catullus effortlessly marshals his hendecasyllables to iambic and epic-hymnic ends, but the abusive is triumphant.

Catullus 42 & 12: Flexible Hendecasyllables

The two poems in which Catullus refers to *hendecasyllabi* by name (42 and 12) each demonstrate the meter's flexibility in iambic/blame and lyric/praise modes. Much like poem 36, Catullus masterfully presents this generic flexibility as effortless; but in the self-identified *hendecasyllabi* Catullus also presents himself as generous, in that he purports to offer his targets the option of blame or praise, provided that they accede to his wishes (in both cases the return of his property). The *hendecasyllabi* are personified explicitly in poem 42:⁵⁴

⁵² Wray 2001, p. 79.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ The tone of poem 12 encourages the reader to infer the verses' physicality, if not personification; cf. Garrison 2012 [1989], p. 102, who calls the *hendecasyllabi* "nearly personified here."

*Adeste, hendecasyllabi, quot estis
 omnes undique, quotquot estis omnes.
 iocum me putat esse moecha turpis,
 et negat mihi vestra reddituram
 pugillaria, si pati potestis. 5
 persequamur eam et reflagitemus.
 quae sit, quaeritis? illa, quam videtis
 turpe incedere, mimice ac moleste
 ridentem catuli ore Gallicani.
 circumsisite eam, et reflagitate, 10
 “moecha putida, redde codicillos,
 redde, putida moecha, codicillos!”
 non assis facit: o lutum, lupanar,
 aut si perditius potest quid esse.
 sed non tamen hoc satis putandum. 15
 quod si non aliud potest, ruborem
 ferreo canis exprimamus ore.
 conclamate iterum altiore voce
 “moecha putida, redde codicillos,
 redde, putida moecha, codicillos!” 20
 sed nil proficimus, nihil movetur.
 mutanda est ratio modusque vobis,
 siquid proficere amplius potestis:
 “pudica et proba, redde codicillos.”*

Come hither, hendecasyllables, how many you are,
 all from every quarter, however many you all are.
 A disgusting slut takes me for a fool,
 and says she'll not return to me my
 tablets, if you please. 5
 Let's go after her, and demand them back.
 You ask who she is? That one whom you see
 strutting around with an impudent gait, in vulgar and
 annoying fashion
 grinning with mouth agape like a Gallic hound.
 Stand round her and demand them back: 10
 “Rotten slut, give back the tablets,
 give back the tablets, rotten slut!”
 She takes no notice? O the tart, the trollop,
 and whatever's worse than that!
 But we must not think this enough. 15
 Which if nothing else is possible,
 let us at least force a blush from the bitch's brazen face.
 Call out again with louder voice:

“Rotten slut, give back the tablets,
 give back the tablets, rotten slut!” 20
 We’ve achieved nothing, she isn’t moved at all.
 You must change your plan and method,
 if you are to make any headway:
 “Chaste and honorable maiden, give back the tablets!”
 Catullus 42⁵⁵

The hendecasyllables of poem 42, referred to by name as *hendecasyllabi*, are personified throughout the poem as if they were members of a gang engaged for the task of shaming their unnamed target into giving up the *pugillaria* (“writing tablets,” l. 5) that she stole. This process, called the *flagitatio*, avoided legal proceedings and instead involved the public shaming of an individual who owed the person who had organized the *flagitatio* money or, as in this case, goods.⁵⁶ The *flagitatores* would surround the target and demand restitution in a louder and louder voice, increasing the chance of causing a scene (which, of course, was the point).⁵⁷

Catullus (or the speaker) begins by exhorting his *hendecasyllabi* to join him in following the girl, ostensibly to familiarize them with the target:

persequamur eam et reflagitemus.
 42.6

The idea conjured up by *persequamur* is of the hendecasyllables physically pursuing the girl (*eam*), who on the page is just out of the verb’s reach. The word *eam*, elided into *et*, is almost swallowed up between the verb of pursuing and the prefix *re-* (“back”). This is underscored when Catullus varies the formula only four lines later:

⁵⁵ Text from Thomson 1997 [1978] except *vestra* for *nostra* in line 4, following *mss. O, G, and R* and Vossius 1684.

⁵⁶ See Usener 1901 for the *flagitatio*.

⁵⁷ Fraenkel 1961, p. 50.

circumsistite eam, et reflagitate,

Catullus 42.10

Here the *hendecasyllabi* are directly ordered to “surround” her and to “demand back [the tablets].” Again on the page the orders are followed: the command words *do* surround the word for “her” (*eam*) in the line.

When their invective proves ineffective at swaying the target, the hendecasyllables effortlessly switch generic tracks to the complimentary, plying the target with (ironic) praise of her virtue, praise which is diametrically opposed to both the previous invective and to the poem’s characterization of her actions as theft.

The ambiguity of the hendecasyllable is metrically apparent from the first two lines of the poem:

υ _ || _ υυ _ υ _ || υ _ x

*adeste, **hendecasyllabi**, quot estis*

_ _ _ υ υ || _ υ _ υ _ x

***omnes** undique, quotquot estis **omnes**,*

Catullus 42.1-2

Since the word *hendecasyllabi* sits—as it must, since it has two successive short syllables—in the middle of the hendecasyllabic line, it bridges the gap between the lyric beginning and iambic end, not quite committing to either. Though in the modern division (glyconic + syncopated iambic metron)⁵⁸ *hendecasyllabi* is still part of the glyconic, the next line clinches the point, with *omnes* (referring to the *hendecasyllabi*) repeated twice, at the very beginning and very end of the line. If the plural personal ending of line 2’s *estis* is also taken into account, words directly referring to the hendecasyllables themselves occur at every single position.

⁵⁸ West 1982.

The speaker is calling up *all* hendecasyllables, not only those with an iambic character, but also those with a lyric character. The former are needed for most of the poem, but the switch to praise at the end, however sarcastic, requires the latter. It must be stressed however that Catullus does not portray these as two separate groups; the entire point is that hendecasyllables are generically flexible and can be pressed into either service, whether invective or flattery.

The hendecasyllables' failure at *flagitatio* uniquely exposes Catullus' vulnerability while simultaneously revealing the meter's flexibility. When the thief is unmoved by their insults, the speaker suggests taking a different tack:

*mutanda est ratio modusque vobis,
siquid proficere amplius potestis:
"pudica et proba, redde codicillos."*

Catullus 42.22-24

The word *modus* can mean "meter," but this is a red herring.⁵⁹ Changing the *ratio*, the "method," would *seem* to entail changing the *modus*. But this is not what Catullus has his *hendecasyllabi* do; the hendecasyllable remains the meter of the final line, but changes its "mode" from blame to praise, thereby demonstrating the range of the meter.

Catullus is making the contention that the hendecasyllabic meter can encompass both blame (the iambic) and blandishments (the lyric/erotic) *without changing said meter*. The praise of line 24 is the same meter as the insults of lines 11-12 (= 19-20). On the other hand, this is not to say that poem 42 in particular will be successful at its object by switching from shaming the thief to praising her. The outcome is left open-ended; this, coupled with the refusal to actually name the *moecha putida* (who is also the *pudica et*

⁵⁹ OLD sv. *modus*, 7 "a rhythmic pattern, measure, beat, metre."

proba) and the physical instantiation of the *hendecasyllabi* as a gang of *flagitatores* seems to emphasize a programmatic reading over a literal one. The very facility of the switch is almost too flippant; a contentious reader might consider the hendecasyllables simply not up to the job of *iambi*, since the *flagitatio* is unsuccessful. In other words, because the hendecasyllables have to change their strategy, the target appears to have all the power—and the *codicilli*.

It is technically true that Catullus exhibits vulnerability in the obvious fact that he loses control of his tablets and whatever poetry they contain. This is what necessitates the *flagitatio* in the first place. Such a response is also not unsurprising for iambic poetry, whose impetus is typically a sense that the poet has been injured by the target in some way. It makes sense that the poet would be looking to injure the offender equivalently, though the method is necessarily limited to injuring the target's reputation.⁶⁰ *Iambi* were thought to be incredibly potent (consider the supposed suicides of Archilochus' and Hipponax' targets). Poem 42 calls to mind Archilochus 196a (the Cologne Epode):

ὄ]πως ἐγὼ γυναιῖκα τ[ο]ιαύτην ἔχων
 γείτοσι χάρμ' ἔσομαι·
 πολλὸν σὲ βούλο[μαι
 σὺ] μὲν γὰρ οὗτ' ἄπιστος οὔτε διπλόη,
 ἦ δ]ὲ μάλ' ὀξύτερη,
 πολλοὺς δὲ ποιεῖτα[ι φίλους·

⁶⁰ The effects of damage to reputation can range from suicide, as for Lycambes and his daughters in Archilochus' biographical tradition, to total inefficacy, particularly if the target is shameless. Cf. Archilochus fr. 201W (πóλλ'οἶδ' ἁλώπηξ, ἀλλ' ἐχῖνος ἐν μέγα), about which Campbell posits that "Archilochus may simply be saying that his iambs are his only weapon, but deadly" (Campbell 1982 [1967], p. 160 [fr. 201W = fr. 103 Campbell]).

... that I having such a wife shall be a delight to my neighbors; I want you more, for you are neither untrustworthy nor double-minded, but *she's* really rather fast, and makes many her 'friends.'

Archilochus 196a.33-38

Here Archilochus mixes blame of Neoboule with praise of her sister in order to accomplish his immediate object—sleeping with the sister—which in turn accomplishes his ultimate object, bringing shame to Neoboule and her family. Whereas in the Cologne Epode, Archilochus plays the women off against one another, blaming one and praising the other, Catullus' hendecasyllables blame and praise the same woman in the space of four lines; no wonder then if they happen to be unsuccessful. In the context of poem 42, just as in the Cologne Epode, the praise is incidental to the blame; the structure of the poem suggests that the target is shameless enough to ignore public insults.

The real question is whether the poem fulfills Catullus' intent. It may simply be that a *flagitatio* was bound to have mixed results, and that its ineffectiveness in this case can be taken in stride—and who better to take it in stride than hendecasyllables?⁶¹ They are flexible enough to encompass mutually exclusive genres in the same poem (or different poems).⁶² I argue however that the real point is not the relative effectiveness of iambic meters vs. hendecasyllables or *iambi* vs. *flagitationes*, but that hendecasyllables can embrace praise and blame with equal facility. For Catullus to have his “gang” switch to blatantly sarcastic praise so readily on the one hand imputes a certain vanity and foolishness to the target; since the outcome is left open-ended, Catullus is actually

⁶¹ Cf. Plautus *Pseudolus* ll. 357ff., where the *flagitatio* is unsuccessful. This is not unlike the iambic attack of Cato on Metellus Scipio for stealing his intended as a last and extrajudicial resort (Plutarch *Life of Cato the Younger* 7; cf. Hawkins 2014, p. 302).

⁶² Again, it is worth noting that even Archilochus supposedly wrote praise poetry as well as blame (see Pindar *Olympian* 9.1-4).

implying that the ridiculous tactic might work, publicly airing the possibility that the thief is vain enough to take the praise seriously.

The poem's outcome is twofold. On the one hand, the thief is exposed as the sort of *moecha putida* who would be vain and shameless enough to think herself *pudica et proba*. On the other hand, at the end of the poem the thief still has possession of the *codicilli*. Catullus accomplishes the shaming he sets out to do, but the *pugillaria* go unreturned. Thus Catullus' vulnerability in poem 42 is literary in the most physical sense: the loss of the tablets. More than that, if line 4 is taken as *vestra* rather than *nostra*, then as Fraenkel points out the *pugillaria* would more properly belong to the *hendecasyllabi*, not Catullus.⁶³ I suggest that what has happened is precisely what a poet devoted to the *labor limae* would most like to avoid. Without any copyright protections, if Catullus and the *hendecasyllabi* cannot quickly regain control of the *codicilli*, there is a danger that the poems will be released prematurely before they are put into their final state.⁶⁴ Out of Catullus' hands, the poetry itself is vulnerable, and the hendecasyllables must use every trick at their disposal to protect them(selves). Pulling back, however, from the particularities of the struggle for the *codicilli*, the poem stands as a metapoetic epideixis of both blame and praise, meant precisely to demonstrate the hendecasyllable's facility in either mode.

⁶³ Fraenkel 1961, p. 46: *vestra* "is required by the legal or quasi-legal fiction on which the whole poem is based. The poems are themselves considered the legitimate owners of the *codicilli* These note-books, being a mere instrument for jotting down the poems, are subordinate to the poems; it is the poems who are their masters and owners."

⁶⁴ Quinn 1973 [1970], p. 216, argues instead that "[t]he missing tablets must ... be those on which C. worked out the first clean version of a number of his poems."

Catullus also uses the term *hendecasyllabi* in poem 12, which is thematically connected to a number of other poems in hendecasyllables and iambic meters, such as the other poems about fabric theft (poems 25 and 33). Unlike these theft poems, however, the shaming of the target is mixed with praise. Much like poem 42, poem 12 demonstrates the flexibility of the hendecasyllable, mixing invective against Asinius Marrucinus with praise of his brother Asinius Pollio (as well as Catullus' friends Veranius and Fabullus):

*Marrucine Asini, manu sinistra
non belle uteris: in ioco atque vino
tollis linthea neglegentiorum.
hoc salsum esse putas? fugit te, inepte;
quamvis sordida res et invenusta est. 5
non credis mihi? crede Pollioni
fratri, qui tua furta vel talento
mutari velit: est enim leporum
differtus puer ac facetiarum.
quare aut hendecasyllabos trecentos 10
exspecta, aut mihi lintheum remitte,
quod me non movet aestimatione,
verum est mnemosynum mei sodalis.
nam sudaria Saetaba ex Hiberis
miserunt mihi muneri Fabullus 15
et Veranius; haec amem necesse est
ut Veraniolum meum et Fabullum.*

Asinius Marrucinus, you do not make a pretty use of
your left hand when we are laughing and drinking;
you take away the napkins of people who are off their
guard.

Do you think this is a good joke? You are mistaken, fool;
it is ever so ill-bred, and in the worst taste. 5
You don't believe me? believe your brother
Pollio, who would be glad to have your thefts redeemed
at the cost of a whole talent; for he is a boy
who is brimful of all that is witty and amusing.
So now either look out for three hundred 10
hendecasyllables, or send me back my napkin,

which does not concern me for what it is worth,
 but because it is a keepsake from my old friend;
 for Fabullus and Veranius sent me
 some Saetaban napkins as a present from 15
 Spain. How can I help being fond of these,
 as I am of my dear Veranius and Fabullus?
 Catullus 12

Whereas poem 42 aimed invective and praise at the same target, in poem 12 attack and praise are split between two members of the same family. Catullus also reveals his vulnerability in this poem, since, as Fitzgerald points out, acknowledging the theft exposes Catullus to a “charge of *ineptia* (tastelessness) from his own complaint.”⁶⁵ Like poem 42, however, this vulnerability is fairly limited in scope (unlike the intersection of iambic and erotic; see pp. 168-181 below).

Catullus’ corrections of Marrucinus are specifically tied to what is appropriate in a gathering of sophisticated friends, a behavior that his brother Pollio is keenly aware of. Thus Marrucinus does not use his left hand *belle* (“suitably,” “appropriately,” l. 2), and he thinks *salsum* (“witty,” l. 4) what is actually *sordida res et invenusta* (“a base and unattractive thing,” l. 5). So Seager:

He operates *in ioco atque vino* (12, 2) thus desecrating the ambiance in which the *Veneres Cupidinesque* delight, and he takes advantage of *neglegentiores* (12, 3), preventing people from relaxing and enjoying the kind of atmosphere in which *venustas* in all its forms may flourish. ... Marrucinus’ behaviour is just not funny, and Pollio has a genuine and discriminating sense of humour, so he knows what is *salsum* and what is not.⁶⁶

Catullus attacks Marrucinus’ bad behavior and lack of sophistication by setting Pollio’s good behavior and charm at odds with him. Catullus has neither wish nor reason to cause

⁶⁵ Fitzgerald 1995, p. 94.

⁶⁶ Seager 1974, p. 891.

Pollio any discomfort; this is perhaps clearest in contrast with the other poem about thieving relatives, poem 33:

*O furum optime balneariorum
Vibenni pater et cinaede fili
(nam dextra pater inquinatio,
culo filius est voracior),
cur non exilium malasque in oras* 5
*itis, quandoquidem patris rapinae
notae sunt populo, et natis pilosas,
fili, non potes asse venditare?*

Cleverest of all clothes-stealers at the baths,
father Vibennius and you, his pansy son
(for father has a wicked hand,
the son a greedier arse),
off with you into banishment on accursed 5
shores, since father's plunderings are
known to all the world, and as for you, son, you can't
sell your hairy buttocks for a penny!
Catullus 33

Catullus' hendecasyllables in the very same poem treat the Asinii separately with blame and praise. Poem 33, however, is undifferentiated abuse of a father-son team of thieves, the Vibennii. The implication is that the two work in concert, the son distracting with his *culo ... voracior* (l. 4) while the father makes off with the goods with his *dextra ... inquinatio* (l. 3). Already, there are a few major distinctions between poem 12 and 33. The Vibennii work together and are painted with the same brush, whereas the Asinii act differently and are thus distinguished from one another by Catullus. Catullus is also much more explicitly crude in his depiction of the Vibennii: the father's right hand is *inquinatio* ("dirtier") as the son's *culus* is *voracior* ("hungrier"). The use of the comparative in both cases implies "than the other," thus staining each with the other's crime; in other words, they are both thieves and *cinaedi*, but each has his specialty.

Catullus therefore takes particular pains not only to contrast the behavior of the two Asinii, but to keep his criticisms of Marrucinus relatively polite. In part, perhaps this is to avoid offending Asinius Pollio, who might take offense at an excessively hostile tone directed towards his brother; it also might serve to teach Marrucinus a lesson about propriety without shattering hopes for a civil relationship in the future.

Marrucinus uses his left hand for theft (*manu sinistra*, 12.1), which is actually the appropriate hand for such activities (inasmuch as there *is* an appropriate hand for theft).⁶⁷ What makes it *non belle* is the situation in which he uses it, the *convivium*, and the fact that he steals something with priceless sentimental value to Catullus. The elder Vibennius uses his right hand (*dextra*, 33.3), making his actions that much more objectionable. Catullus also sets up a commercial contrast between Vibennius the younger and Pollio. The younger Vibennius cannot expect to sell his *nates pilosae* for even a penny (*non potes asse venditare*, 33.8), whereas Pollio would be willing to spend a talent—a truly vast sum of money—to take back his brother’s theft (*tua furta vel talento mutari velit*, 12.7-8). Vibennius *overvalues* his own worthless assets, though the quoted price is laughably low. Pollio better understands the value of correct behavior and of friendship—and therefore knows that the true value of the keepsake (*mnemosynum*, l. 13) is far beyond his brother’s evaluation of it. Pollio’s own valuation of it (at a *very* high price) nevertheless *undervalues* the napkin, simply because he attaches a price to it

⁶⁷ Cf. Krostenko 2001a, p. 241, n. 16, with further references; and Quinn 1973 [1970] *ad loc.*

at all. He “think[s], wrongly, that money is relevant, but Catullus ... claims sentiment, *not* market-value.”⁶⁸

In poem 12, the napkin’s price is the crux of the problem, and Fitzgerald rightly points to it as the factor that forces Catullus both to demonstrate and deny his own vulnerability. By making threats over a napkin (*linteum*, l. 11), Catullus might reveal his own lack of taste and sense of propriety. By characterizing the napkin as a *mnemosynum* (l. 13), much more than just a simple physical object, and by denying that monetary value is at issue (*me non movet aestimatione*, l. 12), Catullus avoids opening himself up to criticism for “*ineptia*, whose spectre he has himself raised.”⁶⁹ In poem 33, Catullus has no stated personal stake in the invective against the Vibennii; the hendecasyllables are wholly iambic and no other genre is mixed in.

The commerce angle is pursued further by the specific threat of *hendecasyllabos trecentos* (“three hundred hendecasyllables,” 12.10). No amount of money—tied to praise of Asinius Pollio—could make up for the stolen napkin, but a faux-specific number of threatening (and therefore iambic) hendecasyllabic lines aimed at Asinius Marrucinus might:

quare aut hendecasyllabos trecentos
exspecta, aut mihi linteum remitte,
quod me non movet aestimatione,
verum est mnemosynum mei sodalis.

Catullus 12.10-13

Giving the hendecasyllables the number 300 also pulls their physicality in two directions, mirroring their generic doubleness; on the one hand, *trecenti* seems like a specific

⁶⁸ Henderson 1999, p. 84.

⁶⁹ Fitzgerald 1995, p. 95.

number, making the threat seem more precise; on the other hand, the word is often used simply to mean an unspecified but large amount.⁷⁰ Heyworth suggests that “*trecentos* makes the more technical and precise term *hendecasyllabos* more appropriate” than *iambos*, but as hendecasyllables are so easily turned towards blame or praise, their very precision is imprecise—and *that* is what makes *trecentos* such an appropriate adjective.⁷¹ The number *trecenti*—like a *talentum*—is both precise and vague, just as the function of the *threatened* hendecasyllables is precise (invective) while the function of the *actual* hendecasyllables of poem 12 is vague.⁷² Catullus thus simultaneously makes his potential invective more specific—and thus more real—while stressing the vague immensity of the napkin’s value. The three hundred lines of poetry are equivalent to the keepsake, and poem 12 itself is, as Henderson puts it, “a ‘napkin-size’ equivalent to a torrent of poems, a concentrate of re-evaluation.”⁷³

In a similar vein, Cairns suggests that “the poem poses as a threat of *flagitatio* while actually being a *flagitatio*.”⁷⁴ In this sense Catullus is limiting his invective’s potency to the point where there is still an opportunity for Marrucinus to back down and return the napkin, putting the status of poem 12 as a *flagitatio* into question despite its connections with poem 42.⁷⁵ The *moecha putida* of poem 42 is in effect denied the opportunity to respond appropriately by returning the *pugillaria* because Catullus’ initial

⁷⁰ OLD sv. *trecenti*, b (used to denote a large number).

⁷¹ Heyworth 2001, p. 129.

⁷² As Thomson 1997 [1973] shows in dividing the poem into three competing themes: “(a) the light-hearted attack on a guest ... (b) a compliment – by contrast – to the offender’s brother, ... (c) acknowledgment of a present sent ... by Fabullus and Veranius” (p. 239).

⁷³ Henderson 1999, pp. 84-85.

⁷⁴ Cairns 1972, p. 94.

⁷⁵ As Cairns 1972, p. 94, acknowledges, Usener 1901 never identifies poem 12 as a *flagitatio*.

attack is so virulent, necessitating the generic switch to praise. In poem 12, the praise of Pollio is an integral part of Catullus' strategy, demonstrating the hendecasyllables' generic flexibility from the beginning. Here, the potential for virulence is merely hinted at. Marrucinus is welcome to read the poem both as providing an example of appropriate behavior (his brother) and as *promising* a future threat (rather than as the threat itself). Thus the poem's target is afforded the choice of responding in a way more to his brother's and Catullus' liking: by returning the napkin.⁷⁶

Both poems in which the term *hendecasyllabi* appears therefore offer their targets a generic choice between lyric and iambic. Poem 42 announces a choice of tactics without changing the basic strategy of *flagitatio*—the strangeness of a *flagitatio* of praise is obviated by the blatant sarcasm, and in both cases the thief is given the option to do as she is enjoined: to return the tablets. Poem 12 likewise purports to extend the choice to the target, Asinius Marrucinus, demonstrating the hendecasyllable's potential for both blame and praise.

Generic Flexibility and Malicious Misreading

I have demonstrated the generic flexibility of the hendecasyllable, mixing the iambic with the (mock-)hymnic and with lyric praise; the iambic is often mixed with the erotic as well. When Catullus' hendecasyllables mix erotic and iambic content, they tend—broadly speaking—to follow the following formula. Catullus explores his own lyric vulnerability with reference to erotic themes and relationships, revealing a softer

⁷⁶ Cf. Syndikus 1984, p. 129.

(more stereotypically feminized) side of his masculinity; he is attacked or otherwise wronged by detractors seeking to exploit this vulnerability, taking it to be symptomatic of Catullus' lack of masculine potency (his *mollitia*). In a bid to reassert his manhood, Catullus counters with an extreme (and usually sexualized) aggression meant to strip his targets of their own masculinity, but the necessity of performing this overblown version of ideal masculinity ends up calling it into question by drawing attention back to its source: Catullus' original erotic-lyric vulnerability.

Of the poems that mention *iambi* directly, poem 40 is the only one to also specifically use the word *amores*, and *meos amores* (l. 7) is in the same metrical *sedes* as *meos iambos* (l. 2).

*Quaenam te mala mens, miselle Raude,
agit praecipitem in meos iambos?
quis deus tibi non bene advocatus
vecordem parat excitare rixam?
an ut pervenias in ora vulgi? 5
quid vis? qualubet esse notus optas?
eris, quandoquidem meos amores
cum longa voluisti amare poena.*

What infatuation, my poor Ravidus,
drives you headlong in the way of my iambs?
What god invoked by you amiss
is going to stir up a senseless quarrel?
Is it that you wish to be talked about? 5
What do you want? would you be known, no matter how?
So you shall, since you have chosen to love my lover,—
with a long punishment.

Catullus 40

In Catullus' poetry, *iambi* are in the first instance abusive verses or poems, which are then personified or treated as physical objects. I argue that *amores* work inversely;

though they appear primarily to refer to a person (“lover”), I suggest that their secondary function is metapoetic, alluding to erotic lyric poetry. Poem 40 demonstrates Catullus’ vulnerability specifically where the iambic and the erotic intersect, but this vulnerability is turned back against the target by means of a threatened or fulfilled attack. This attack is prompted by Ravidus’ taking advantage of Catullus’ *amores*. This is true as well of the other invective poems which share the phrase *mei amores*, 15 and 21, and which like poem 40 are usually taken to be about Juventius.⁷⁷ In poem 40, the reason Ravidus flings himself onto Catullus’ *iambi* and makes himself notorious (lines 5-6) is revealed in the last two lines of the poem:

∪ _ _ ∪ ∪ _ ∪ _ ∪ _ x
eris, quandoquidem meos amores
 _ _ _ ∪ ∪ _ ∪ _ ∪ _ x
cum longa voluisti amare poena.

Catullus 40.7-8

The phrase *mei amores* here is usually taken as “my lover.” Here it sits on the iambic side of the hendecasyllabic line, in the same *sedes* as *amare poena*, which has been plausibly identified as a pun on *pene*.⁷⁸ Thomson, through comparison with poems 15 and 21, identifies the lover as Juventius:

So far as we can be sure, *mei amores* is never applied to Lesbia [B]etween these two poems [sc. 40 & 15] there are in fact other links; for example, only in them does C. use the word *vecors*; only in them, the expression *mala mens*; and ... in both of them the person addressed is characterized as *miser* or *misellus*. ... [P]oem 15 is in hendecasyllables, is addressed to a named person, and ends with a threat of punishment in the event of sexual misbehaviour with the poet’s beloved. All three of these also appear in poem 21⁷⁹

⁷⁷ So Thomson 1997 [1978], p. 308.

⁷⁸ Thomson rather circumspectly alludes to the possibility (*ibid.*). Garrison 2012 [1989] *ad loc.* is more explicit.

⁷⁹ Thomson, *ibid.*

I do not deny the possibility that the reference in all three of these poems is to Juventius, but I am compelled to point out that Juventius' name appears in none of them. The name is not impossible to render into hendecasyllables; it appears in poems 24 (*Iuventiorum*, l. 1) and 48 (*Iuventi*, l. 1), both in the same meter.

I suggest that this ambiguity is deliberate. Another possible reading of *amores* is as "love songs," à la Ovid's *Amores*.⁸⁰ Consider what Catullus intends to bring to Fabullus' party in poem 13:

— — — ∪ ∪ — ∪ — ∪ — x
*sed contra accipies **meros** **amores***
 13.9

Fordyce points out that the pluralization of *amor* here makes it "more concrete," and Vessey suggests that what is meant in poem 13 is conversation or love poetry.⁸¹ Both of these are certainly appropriate to a *convivium*.⁸² Bernstein, following Buchheit's observation that Catullan poetry often conceals its underlying purpose beneath some dramatic conceit (in this case, a dinner invitation), sees poem 13 as filled with references

⁸⁰ OLD sv. *amor*, 5 "A love-song, love-story," citing usages in Vergil and Ovid. The first Vergil passage (*Eclogue* 8.23) and both Ovid passages (*Ars Amatoria* 3.343 and *Tristia* 2.362) certainly refer to love-songs, but at *Eclogue* 10.53, *amores* is repeated in the same *sedes* in the following line (*malle pati tenerisque meos incidere amores / arboribus: crescent illae, crescetis, amores*, ll. 53-54). Though again they both seem to refer to love poems, the second instance is apostrophized and thus personified. Consider also that *amores* as not an unreasonable translation of Greek ἔρωτες or ἐρωτικά. Phanocles' Ἐρωτες are an early example (probably from the 3rd C. BCE). Though the dates are uncertain (but possible) for influence on Catullus himself (and likely for the later neoterics), Parthenius' Ἐρωτικά Παθήματα are love-stories, not poetry themselves but intended to provide source material for the poetry of Cornelius Gallus (himself the subject of *Eclogue* 10). Catullus has already characterized his *hendecasyllabi* as a gang of *flagitatores* and his *iambi* as weapons or soldiers; treating *amores* with similar ambiguity seems not unreasonable.

⁸¹ Fordyce 1961, *ad loc.*; Vessey 1971, pp. 46-47.

⁸² For poetry at *convivia*, see Dozier 2008, pp. 66-121.

to Catullan poetic style: “plain, witty, and amorous.”⁸³ The unguent in particular has been identified as a metaphor for Lesbia’s beauty by Vessey and Edmunds;⁸⁴ Bernstein points out that the *Veneres Cupidinesque* (13.12), who provide the unguent, “as in [poems] 3 and 36, ... represent the gods of men like Fabullus and the poet himself who share in *venustas* ... [and] stand as archetypes for erotic poetry and a life given over to sensual pleasure and love.”⁸⁵ Nappa gives three possibilities for *amores*: a lover, love poetry, or simply convivial friendship.⁸⁶

In poem 13, line 9’s *meros amores* is extremely close to *meos amores* (the latter is actually the reading of *ms O*); *meos amores* appears as a combination three other times in the hendecasyllables, all at the end of the line, in the same *sedes*: at 15.1, 21.4, and 40.7. Even if *meros* is the correct reading, it still calls these other instances not only to mind, but also into question.⁸⁷ They primarily refer to a boyfriend, probably even Juventius, but they can also allude to love poetry.

In poem 13, of course, there is no iambic content. Returning to poem 40, the phrase *cum longa poena* is usually taken in the sense “with a lengthy punishment as a consequence”;⁸⁸ in other words, the *poena* is Catullus’ iambic revenge on Ravidus. However, the phrase *longa poena* (= *pene*) could be (mis)read as *belonging* to Ravidus

⁸³ Bernstein 1985, p. 129, following Buchheit 1975. Bernstein lists the words in poem 13 which pertain to style: *candida*, l. 4; *sale*, l. 5; *venuste*, l. 6; *meros amores*, l. 9; *sauvius elegantiusve*, l. 10; *unguentum*, l. 11; *Veneres Cupidinesque*, l. 12; and *nasum*, l. 13.

⁸⁴ Vessey 1971, pp. 47-48; Edmunds 1982, pp. 184-186.

⁸⁵ Bernstein 1985, p. 129.

⁸⁶ Nappa 1998, p. 390.

⁸⁷ On the one hand, *meros amores* punctures the expectation that Catullus might actually show up with wine, but the fact that Furius has already been charged with providing the *vinum* (13.5) tells against it.

⁸⁸ As in *OLD* sv. *cum*¹, 12. So Quinn 1973 [1970], *ad loc.*

rather than *penetrating* him.⁸⁹ This would suggest that Ravidus has transgressed by loving/delighting in the love-poetry/lover (*amores*) in an inappropriately prurient way, with *his own* “long punishment.” This misreading also puts Ravidus’ desire to be *in ora vulgi* in a very different light, as his notoriety becomes the ultimate expression of his aggressive masculinity.⁹⁰

Poems 15 and 40 are two sides of the same coin, following almost the same script, but from different perspectives in time. In poem 40, the transgression has already occurred, and Ravidus is in the process of throwing himself, present tense (*agit praecipitem*, 40.2), onto Catullus’ *iambi*. The “correct” reading has Ravidus punishing himself for not taking Catullus or his poetry seriously. Poem 15 threatens a similar punishment, but Aurelius has not yet transgressed:

<i>Commendo tibi me ac meos amores,</i>	
<i>Aureli. veniam peto pudenter,</i>	
<i>ut, si quicquam animo tuo cupisti,</i>	
<i>quod castum expeteres et integellum,</i>	
<i>conserves puerum mihi pudice,</i>	5
<i>non dico a populo – nihil veremur</i>	
<i>istos, qui in platea modo huc modo illuc</i>	
<i>in re praetereunt sua occupati –</i>	
<i>verum a te metuo tuoque pene</i>	
<i>infesto pueris bonis malisque.</i>	10
<i>quem tu qua lubet, ut lubet, moveto</i>	
<i>quantum vis, ubi erit foris paratum;</i>	
<i>hunc unum excipio, ut puto, pudenter.</i>	
<i>quod si te mala mens furorque vecors</i>	
<i>in tantam impulerit, sceleste, culpam,</i>	15
<i>ut nostrum insidiis caput lacessas,</i>	
<i>a tum te miserum malique fati!</i>	

⁸⁹ Ravidus impales himself on the *iambi*, and the *longa poena*, which is literally to be *in ora vulgi* (“on the lips of the mob,” l. 5) is presented as a natural consequence, without any real effort ascribed to Catullus himself.

⁹⁰ Cf. poem 37, where Catullus analogously threatens to irrumate the two hundred *sessores*.

*quem attractis pedibus patente porta
percurrent raphanique mugilesque.*

To you, I entrust my all, even my lover,
Aurelius, and I ask a favor of you, a modest favor.
If you have ever with all your soul desired
to keep anything pure and free from stain,
then guard my darling now in safety— 5
I don't mean from the vulgar throng; I have no fear
of such as pass to and fro our streets
absorbed in their own business.
It's you I fear, you and your penis,
so ready to molest good boys and bad. 10
Set it in motion to your heart's content,
where and how you please when you walk abroad:
This one boy I would have you spare: I think it's a modest
request.
And if infatuate frenzy
drive you to the heinous crime 15
of treason against me,
ah! then I pity you and your sad fate.
For before the city's gaze with fettered feet
you shall be tortured with radishes and mullets.
Catullus 15

Whereas in poem 40 Ravidus puts himself in the mouths of the crowd (*in ora vulgi*, 40.5), in poem 15, Catullus is untroubled by the *populus*, who are too busy to go bothering his *amores* (15.5-8), whether that means propositioning his beloved or reading his love poetry (cf. Catullus' dismissal of the *rumores senum severiorum* of 5.2). The penis he cares about and fears is Aurelius', and indeed he invites Aurelius to go after whatever other boys he likes (*quem tu qua lubet, ut lubet, moveto / quantum vis, ubi erit foris paratum*, 15.11-12), as long as they are not Catullus'. Likewise, there is still a chance for Aurelius to behave correctly in reading Catullus' poems with good literary taste rather than with prurience.

There is room for multiple readings, just as there are multiple generic modes in the hendecasyllables. Catullus consistently presents himself in these poems as trying to put a stop to what he characterizes as misreadings with a display of sexualized hypermasculine invective, attempting to rein in the hendecasyllable's generic flexibility to a single, iambic mode. Why in the first line does Catullus entrust or recommend his *amores* to Aurelius? Logically, there would be no reason to do so, especially considering Catullus "fear[s] for good boys and bad from you and your hostile penis" (*verum a te metuo tuoque pene / infesto pueris bonis malisque*, ll. 9-10). Mirroring his taste for boys, Aurelius is likewise indiscriminating in his appreciation of erotic poetry. Poem 16 points in this direction, since Furius and Aurelius are criticized for reading Catullus' erotic poetry for the purpose of their own titillation (16.9-11), and not because they have good taste—unlike Fabullus in poem 13, who Catullus expects to be able to provide a *candida puella, vinum, sal, and omnes cachinni*.⁹¹

Even more interestingly, why does Catullus entrust *himself* to Aurelius? To explain *me ac meos amores*, Thomson gives an example from Terence's *Phormio*, *vobis commendo Phanium et vitam meam* ("I entrust Phanium and my life to you," l. 218), but the speaker, Antipho, had previously stated his unwillingness to live if he were denied Phanium: *quod si eo meae fortunae redeunt, Phanium, abs te ut distrahar, / nullast mihi vita expetenda* ("If my fortunes pay me back with this, Phanium, to be separated from you, I don't desire to live," ll. 200-201).⁹² This suggests that *me* is not actually

⁹¹ See Bernstein's list of 'style' words, reproduced above. Perhaps *cachinnis* = "mocking laughs" (see pp. 122-135 above on poem 31); if so, presumably it is directed at targets Catullus considers appropriate.

⁹² Thomson 1997 [1978], p. 248.

Why, they only acquire wit and spice
 if they are rather naughty and immodest,
 and can rouse with their ticklings,
 I don't mean boys, but those hairy old men 10
 unable to stir their seized-up loins.
 Because you've read of my many thousands of kisses,
 do you think I'm less virile on that account?
 I'll bugger you and stuff you.

Catullus 16

In poem 16, Aurelius (and Furius) misread the kiss poems (*milia multa basiorum / legistis*, l. 12-13) as saying something autobiographical about Catullus' improper behavior. I argue that the metapoetical implications of *amores* in poem 15 set Aurelius up for this failure in judgment in poem 16. In the former poem, Catullus seems to be submitting himself and his boyfriend (alluding to his love-poems), separate but related, for Aurelius' consideration; in poem 16, it is clear that Aurelius has found himself unable to keep the two separate, and thus receives a violently sexual punishment equivalent to the *raphanidosis* threatened in poem 15. In poem 16, Catullus' "verses themselves are *molliculi* (lines 4, 8); like pathics, *cinaedi*, they (as it were) waggle their asses ... and cause the reader to become aroused (lines 9-11)."⁹⁵ The verses he refers to are clearly the hendecasyllabic kiss-poems (5, 7, and/or 48). The threat of *irrumatio* and *pedicatio* then is effectively corrective rape, meant to teach Aurelius and Furius a lesson about *misreading* poetry: that just because hendecasyllables are versatile it does not follow that they—and their author—are soft. Their appearance of *mollitia* is a trap, and when Catullus' sense of his own masculinity is threatened by other males, he and his verses are apt to overcorrect to the most severe extremes of *duritia*.

⁹⁵ Richlin 1992 [1983], p. 146.

In this estimation, Aurelius is a harsh literary critic, and a poor one, who misreads the proffered poetry. He reads Catullus' *amores* as autobiographical, but (rather inconsistently) he fails to take Catullus' *iambi* seriously. Poems 15 and 40 are equivalent in many ways, as Thomson noted (see above). I mention again the use of *miser/misellus* to refer to Aurelius and Ravidus (*miserum*, 15.17 and *miselle*, 40.1, respectively). This word is consistently used by Catullus in a variety of meters to describe someone suffering from lovesickness or in an erotic context (particularly himself, at 8.1 & 10; 30.5; 50.9; and 51.5; but also the *passer*, 3.16; Caecilius' girlfriend, 35.14; and Septimius, 45.21).⁹⁶ In poems 15 and 40, its attribution to Aurelius and Ravidus, rather than Catullus, serves to transfer Catullus' pseudo-literary vulnerability (i.e., the violation of his *amores* as equivalent to the misreading of his love poetry) to his targets, who are or will be punished for their transgressions. The hendecasyllable's flexibility between lyric and iambic modes allows its weaponization in defense of Catullus' and to the belittlement of his detractors' masculinity.

The misreading of poem 40 (i.e., assigning the *longa poena* to Ravidus) is equivalent to the misreading that Catullus attributes to Furius and Aurelius in poem 16. Although reading Catullus' verses *have the ability* to cause arousal (*quod pruriat incitare possunt*, l. 9), even "for these hairy [*sc.* fully-grown] men who are unable to get their

⁹⁶ The trope also is in effect outside the polymetrics, e.g. at 61.132, where the *concubinus* is referred to as *miser* because his lover is getting married and he himself now has to be shaved to try to retain his youthful appearance; 63.51 & 61, where Attis rejects her frenzied adoration for Cybele and regrets her decision to unman herself and leave her home, where she was the *gymnasi ... flos* (l. 64); and 64.57 (*et passim*), where Ariadne's love for Theseus is taken advantage of, leaving her abandoned. Cf. also 65.21; 67.24; 76.12 & 19; 77.4 (though here *misero* is itself the only indication that Rufus' betrayal was erotic in nature); 80.7; 91.2; and 99.11 & 15. *Miser* is also associated with death, as for the sparrow (3.16) and Catullus' brother (68.14 *et passim*; 101.2 & 6), though all but poem 101 share erotic language.

rusty loins in gear” (*his pilosis / qui duros nequeunt movere lumbos*, ll. 10-11), to take this as the *purpose* of Catullus’ erotic poetry wholly misses the point, which is proper appreciation of their *salem et leporem* (“wit and charm,” l. 7).

Moving from poem 15 to 16 and thence to 21, the twin punishments of poem 16 (*pedicabo ... et irrumabo*, ll. 1 & 14) not only instantiate the threatened *raphanidosis* of the last line of poem 15, but put a stop to any misuse/critique of Catullus’ *amores* by stuffing Aurelius’ mouth full. Poem 16 is focused on doubles, and thus is a perfect fit for the flexibility of hendecasyllables; though neither word appears in the poem, Catullus effectively makes a point about the relationship between love poetry (*amores*) and its author by using invective (*iambi*) to graphically punish that poetry’s (mis)readership. The poem involves double miscreants, Furius and Aurelius; they are punished with two forms of sexual assault, *irrumatio* and *pedicatio*, twice (ll. 1 & 14), for two reasons: equating Catullus with his poetry (*qui me ex versiculis meis putastis, / quod sunt molliculi, parum pudicum*, ll. 3-4) and misreading that poetry as solely for the purpose of titillation (*qui tum denique habent salem ac leporem, / si sunt molliculi ac parum pudici*, ll. 7-8), which is a natural side effect but misses the point that “salt” and “wit” are an integral part of the genre of erotic light verses. Catullus is saying that the vulnerability ascribed to his *person* is actually only a literary construct, then muddies the waters by using a literary construct to attack his detractors’ vulnerabilities. As Selden observes, poem 16 “not only warns its readers off of any access to the writer through his text, but is specifically set up to block that passage;” poem 15 purports to offer up both Catullus and his *amores* (lover or text?) for Aurelius’ consideration (*commendo tibi me ac meos*

amores, 15.1), but then denies access to either by channeling that consideration into a solitary imagined possibility, sexual misconduct that demands punishment in kind.

In poem 21, the abusive intentions of Aurelius in poem 15 are confirmed.

Catullus sets up Aurelius to be *irrumatus* in the last line of poem 21 (l. 14) with the first line, by calling him *pater esuritionum* (“father of appetites,” l. 1):

*Aureli, pater esuritionum,
non harum modo, sed quot aut fuerunt
aut sunt aut aliis erunt in annis,
pedicare cupis meos amores.
nec clam: nam simul es, iocaris una, 5
haerens ad latus omnia experiris.
frustra: nam insidias mihi instruentem
tangam te prior irrumatione.
atque id si faceres satur, tacerem;
nunc ipsum id doleo, quod esurire 10
a te mi puer et sitire discet.
quare desine, dum licet pudico,
ne finem facias, sed irrumatus.*

Aurelius, father of appetites,
not these only but all that have been
or are or shall be in future years,
you wish to bugger my lover.
And not on the quiet: you keep with him, jest in his
company, 5
you stick close to his side and leave nothing untried.
All in vain: as you plot against me,
I'll touch you first with a mouth-stuffing.
If you had your belly full I should say nothing;
as it is, what annoys me is that the boy 10
will learn how to be hungry and thirsty.
Stop, then, while you decently can,
or you will finish up by getting stuffed.

Catullus 21

Even in this hendecasyllable poem with what appears to be a wholly iambic character,

Catullus demonstrates the meter's flexibility in lines 2-3 with a mock-epic-hymnic appeal

to past, present, and future.⁹⁷ The main point of the poem, however, is that Aurelius wants to inflict anal rape on Catullus' *amores*, in an overestimation of his own and an underestimation of Catullus' masculinity. Catullus counters with the threat of preemptive irrumation, not only punishing the transgression but unexpectedly assuaging Aurelius' hunger; if Aurelius cannot control his appetites for the erotic, Catullus will stuff him with the iambic. This over-the-top response, however, as in poems 15 and 16, betrays by its very vehemence Catullus' anxiety over the status of his masculinity.

Conclusion

Hendecasyllables are employed by Catullus for a variety of uses encompassing both lyric and iambic modes, as well as in mockery of more elevated modes such as the epic-hymnic. Catullus demonstrates through usage that he is clearly cognizant of the iambic line-end with his placement of the word *iambi* in poems 36, 40, 54, and fr. 3, though whether from exposure to metrical theory on the hendecasyllable or simply from observation, possibly spurred by Callimachus' hendecasyllabic *Iambos* 14 (= *Melos* 1), is uncertain. Unlike the iambic poems, however, Catullus draws particular attention to the hendecasyllables as poetry, calling them *iambi*. The need for labels all but invites misreadings, since if the hendecasyllable were generically fixed, no labels would be

⁹⁷ So for example the Muses at Hesiod *Theogony* 38 (εἰρυνσαι τά τ' ἔόντα τά τ' ἐσσόμενα πρό τ' ἔόντα, "telling of the things that are and the things that will be and the things that were before"). He does the same in two other hendecasyllable poems, 24 and 49, in each case at lines 2-3. Each of these also demonstrates the meter's generic flexibility; 24 combines praise of Juventius and his family with denigration of Furius, the man with "neither slave nor cashbox" (*huic neque servus est neque arca*, l. 8), and poem 49, addressed to Cicero, is famously ambiguous, since it can be read either as effusive praise or as mockery of Cicero's willingness to defend anybody ("you, the best patron of all [patrons] / you, the best patron of everybody," *tu optimus omnium patronus*, l. 7).

necessary. This is especially clear in the poems where they are identified explicitly as *hendecasyllabi*, in poems 42 and 12, since these poems exult in flexibility between blame and praise modes.

Poem 16 reveals the crux of the problem inherent in hendecasyllables. Because the meter is generically flexible, the hendecasyllabic poems taken as a whole offer what *appears* to be a more complete, lived experience than that depicted in any single genre. This experience is made all the more concrete because of the verses' very physicality, whether as a gang of *hendecasyllabi* or as weaponized *iambi*. The tendency then is for the audience to take events as autobiographical; for example, the validity of the assertion in poem 42 that a woman has made off with Catullus' writing-tablets is paradoxically reinforced by the elaborate metaphorical conceit of sending verses to berate and wheedle her, which is at once purely literary and viscerally physical. The hendecasyllables' association with *amores* (= love-songs) says no more about Catullus the poet than his bending them to an iambic purpose, and yet if readers (or the targets) take one seriously, they are compelled to do the same for the other. Catullus encourages this even as he seems to discourage it; when "the vulnerability of his proclamations of love" (16.12-13) call his manhood into question, as Richlin argues, he asserts himself with rape (itself a poetic conceit with Priapic associations) couched in the form of the kind of on-the-street rabble-rousing that a reader might see instantiated in real life, complete with repetitions and loaded questions.⁹⁸ When Catullus' erotic literary vulnerability (and therefore his masculinity) comes under assault, the flexibility of the hendecasyllables not only allows

⁹⁸ Richlin 1992 [1983], pp. 146-148.

for but also *necessitates* a swift and harsh iambic response⁹⁹—a response that ironically calls more attention to the very vulnerability it is meant to deny.

⁹⁹ Cf. Rosen & Keane 2014, p. 382.

Chapter Four: Catullan Invective and Elegiac Couplets

Introduction

The poems in the “third book” of Catullus (69-116)¹ share three main characteristics. First, they run a dozen lines or fewer, with only two exceptions, poems 76 (26 lines) and 99 (16 lines). Second, they are all in the same meter, elegiac couplets. Finally, the invective poems in this group (31 of 49 poems, including poems 69, 71, 74, 78a-81, 83, 84, 86, 88-91, 93-95, 97, 98, 103, 105, 106, 108, and 110-116)² are in almost every case concerned with what the Romans—or at least Catullus—would consider an inappropriate or out-of-balance relationship.

I argue that this relational imbalance is a central thematic preoccupation in Catullus’ elegiac epigrams.³ Of the abusive epigrams, poems 69, 71, 79, 83, 91 and 97 plausibly involve Lesbia’s relationships with other men, and 81 and possibly 103 and 106 do the same for Juventius. Considering that Catullus presents his relationship with Lesbia as a *foedus*, for her to be with anyone else is naturally counter to his preferred relational power dynamic.⁴ 74, 78a, 79, 88, 89, 90, 91, and 111 all involve incest, mixed with adultery, betrayal, and/or barbarism, and so are on firm ground as un-Roman relationships. Poem 113 just involves adultery, but of Pompey’s wife, and so makes a cuckold of one of the most powerful men in Rome. 78b, 79, 80, 88, 97, 98, 112, and

¹ This is a common division of the corpus as it stands (1-60, 61-68, 69-116), though strong arguments have been made for dividing the final third as 65-116; cf. Skinner 2003 as well as Tatum 1997 on parallels between poems 65 and 116 (i.e., Catullus as *amicus inferior*).

² A further 11 poems involve bitterness or complaint, an extremely common theme in *iambos*.

³ This reading is not incompatible with Skinner’s reading of the elegiacs (poems 65-116) as concerned primarily with deceptive speech (2003), though I question what she presents as their politicization in many cases, e.g. poems 97 and 99 (pp. 117-123).

⁴ On *fides* and *foedus* in the Lesbia-Catullus relationship, see Lyne 1980, pp. 33ff.

possibly 108 involve the *os impurum*⁵ or charges of effeminacy, and so are a policing of “proper” gender and sexual expression. 84, 86, 94, 95, 97, 105, 114 and 115 puncture the pretensions—sometimes literary—of those who think they are stylish and urbane, but whom Catullus considers rustic or provincial. 103 and 110 involve broken agreements (as do, in a sense, all the Lesbia and Juventius poems). Finally, poems 93, 116, and the rest of the Gellius poems demonstrate failures of the patron-client system—which even when it functions as it should puts a superior and inferior into a kind of equilibrium that is nonetheless by nature unequal. Though the elegiac epigrams without invective lie outside the scope of this study, the conceit of relationships out of balance could plausibly be extended even to the non-abusive epigrams.

The first two characteristics I mentioned above, brevity and meter, link these poems with the Greek epigram tradition as found in the *Greek Anthology*.⁶ Meter and content taken together reveal something very interesting. Elegiac distichs are inherently unbalanced, with even-numbered lines falling a foot shorter than odd-numbered lines (but see pp. 187-192 below).⁷ I contend that Catullus chose the meter for these poems at least in part because he wished to match his vignettes of unbalanced relationships with a similarly unbalanced meter.

Considering that so many of his elegiac epigrams involve an attack on another party, what makes the elegiac couplet available to Catullus for invective? The answer is probably twofold. Predecessors who wrote invective in elegiac meters are extremely

⁵ See Richlin 1992 [1983], pp. 150-151; cf. Worman 2008.

⁶ Themes prevalent in the *Greek Anthology* are also very common in Catullus’ polymetric poems (1-60), despite the marked difference in meter (see Fuhrer 1994).

⁷ More precisely, rather than 6 feet / 5 feet (hexameter / pentameter), it falls 6 feet / 2½ + 2½ feet.

scarce, and most of what exists is mocking and satirical, but nowhere near as abusive as Catullus' elegiac epigrams. Despite this difference in magnitude, Hellenistic skoptic epigram, though the height of its *floruit* was after Meleager (and thus post-Catullan), could have provided a model in the sense that it did pair the elegiac distich with invective content.⁸ Blomqvist suggests that the practice of naming a real target with political power rather than a purely literary one had gone out of fashion in Greek epigram by the time Catullus is writing, but this would not have prevented Catullus from looking to earlier sources that did target individuals.⁹ On balance, however, Catullus' willingness to name names is anomalous in the contemporary epigrammatic tradition except among the other neoteric poets, and probably draws on a Roman tradition, not of epigram as Ross argues,¹⁰ but of aristocratic *libertas* (see the *Introduction* above, esp. pp. 4-10). Instead, Catullus draws on the Greek epigram tradition *stylistically* (particularly stemming from that part of the tradition rooted in Theognis, and thence to Asclepiades and Callimachus; see pp. 192-196 below).¹¹

What is possibly of greater weight for Catullus is that the earliest literary elegiac couplets are by Archilochus, the archetypal invective poet. Considering the connections with the Archaic iambic tradition throughout the Catullan corpus, I think it likely that for Catullus, Archilochus' reputation as an abusive poet was extended to *all* kinds of poetry

⁸ See Blomqvist 1998; Catullus and some of the earlier authors of Greek skoptic epigrams share a taste for "[p]ersonal involvement The poems are directed against contemporaries who are mostly identified by their names ..." (p. 50).

⁹ Blomqvist 1998, p. 55.

¹⁰ Ross 1969, refining the argument of Sedgwick 1950, p. 65, sees the shorter elegiac couplets as being "at the end of a tradition of Roman epigram" (p. 122), as distinct from the longer elegies (poems 64-68). To Ross, this helps explain the "metrical roughness and lack of elegance" in the epigrams (p. 115; cf. Wheeler 1915), but I argue that any "roughness" is meant to reflect the broken relationships that the epigrams depict.

¹¹ Fain 2008, pp. 65-138; cf. Morelli 2007, p. 536.

that he wrote.¹² This is analogous to the way the biographical tradition for Archilochus gelled around his invective poetry, which had the effect of inextricably linking invective and *iambos* together despite the fact that most of the Archilochean corpus as it stands has no discernible invective. In other words, it is possible that the overriding traditional image of Archilochus as invective poet makes any form he wrote in seem an appropriate vehicle for invective.¹³ On its face, it is slightly puzzling that elegiac couplets never accrue a generic association with invective, as *iambos* does, but perhaps it is simply because Archilochus' elegies contain no invective, and because the form was picked up so quickly by other early elegists like Tyrtaeus and Callinus (neither of whom wrote *iambos*) for non-invective purposes. The use of *iambos* for invective would meanwhile have been confirmed by Semonides and Hipponax. In respect to the elegiac meter, Lucilius' reputation was similar to Archilochus'; though he wrote in elegiac couplets, from what remains these lacked invective, and like Archilochus, Lucilius becomes inextricably associated with his genre (satire); thus the meter he ultimately chooses, dactylic hexameter, becomes the meter of most later satire. Catullus then exploits for abusive purposes a form used by the preeminent Greek and Roman abusive poets—yet not used by them for abuse.

Elegiac Structure

There must be structural reasons why the elegiac epigram commended itself to Catullus as an invective vehicle. First I will discuss the purely structural tensions

¹² On the Archilochean biographical afterlife, see Hawkins 2014, esp. pp. 1-31; and Rotstein 2010.

¹³ See Rotstein 2010, *passim*.

inherent in the elegiac meter; then following Morgan and Thorsen I will demonstrate their generic weight.¹⁴

In elegiac couplets, hexameter lines (*A* and *D* below) are coupled with pentameter lines, but each half of the pentameter (*B* and *C*) is identical due to the regular diaeresis which separates them into two metrically equivalent *hemiepes*:

A) – ˘ | – ˘ | – || ˘ | – ˘ | – ˘ | – x
B) – ˘ | – ˘ | – || *C*) – ˘ | – ˘ | – x
D) – ˘ | – ˘ | – ˘ | – || ˘ | – ˘ | – x¹⁵

The hexameter by itself is, of course, associated with the epic genre above all else. In effect, the elegiac couplet is a series of false hexametrical epic starts.¹⁶ Part *B* begins exactly as part *A*, but instead of continuing the dactylic pattern, it hesitates and begins again at part *C*. It hesitates again at the end of the line and restarts with part *D*, another full hexameter line. Thus in the space of three lines, the epic-heroic rhythm commences four times, but those at *B* and *C* halt and restart (at *C* and *D*, respectively).

In theory, the fact that the pentameter line is not a hexameter only becomes clear at the pair of short syllables in the second half of *C*'s first foot, since the diaeresis mimics the hexameter's strong third-foot caesura (as in *A*). In practice, this gives a poet the option of minimizing the effect of the diaeresis by avoiding a sense-pause (though a word-break is mandatory), as in the first two lines of Valerius Aedituus (fr. 2 Courtney):

¹⁴ Morgan 2012 and Thorsen 2013.

¹⁵ The caesura in the hexameter line can appear in the middle of the third (see line *A*) or fourth foot (*D*) after the long syllable, or after the first short syllable in the third foot if that foot is a dactyl.

¹⁶ So Thorsen 2013, p. 369: "as many as three hexameters arguably start within the span of an elegiac couplet. Obviously, however, only the first of these three hexametrical starts is brought to its hexametrical finish."

_ _ _ | _ _ _ | _ || _ _ _ | _ || _ _ | _ _ _ | _ x
Quid faculam praefers, Phileros, quæ est nil opus nobis?
 _ _ _ | _ _ _ | _ || _ _ _ | _ _ _ | _ x
ibimus sic, lucet pectore flamma satis.

Why are you bearing a torch, Phileros, which is no use to us?
 we will go as we are, the flame from my heart blazes enough.
 Valerius Aedituus 2.1-2

Until the second syllable of *pectore* in line 2, there is no indication that the line is not a hexameter, and indeed the sounds –*cet* and *pect-* are fairly similar. Compare the heavily stressed sense pause at Catullus 94.2 (on which see pp. 196-202 below):

_ _ | _ _ | _ || _ _ _ | _ _ _ | x
hoc est quod dicunt: ipsa olera olla legit.

This is what they say: the pot picks its own vegetables.
 Catullus 94.2

Here Catullus marks either side of the diaeresis by very different sounds, beginning with the thuddingly spondaic and prosaic hemiepes A (“this is what they say”) and ending with the rolling, heavily elided dactyls and repeated liquids of hemiepes B. The sense of *dicunt* is also heavily contrasted with *legit*; here, the latter means “it picks/chooses,” but the word is identical to “reads,” forming a contrastive pair (“they say” vs. “he/she/it reads”).

Ovid *Amores* 1.1.1-2 threads the needle between these two possibilities, avoiding a sense pause but marking both sides of the diaeresis as related but contrasting pairs:

_ _ _ | _ _ _ | _ || _ _ _ | _ _ _ | _ _ _ | _ x
Arma gravi numero violentaque bella parabam
 _ _ _ | _ _ _ | _ || _ _ _ | _ _ _ | _ x
edere, materia conveniente modis

I was preparing arms and violent wars in a serious rhythm,
 to publish them, with matter fitting the meters
 Ovid *Amores* 1.1.1-2

Parts *B* (using the schema above) and *C* are almost grammatically equivalent (verbal noun + ablative noun || verbal adjective + ablative noun), but a sense break—if not word break—at the diaeresis is avoided. The contrastive pair *materia/modis* (“matter”/“measures”) stresses the difference. The next couplet confirms the tendency to refer to the pentameter line as missing a foot (*par erat inferior versus; risisse Cupido / dicitur atque unum surripuisse pedem*, ll. 3-4), though this is actually an oversimplification. In fact, each hemiepes is not three feet (half an epic line), but only two and a half feet; thus in the pentameter line, the two hemiepes are each missing half a foot.¹⁷

In a stichic meter, a halting effect is only possible in something like a choliamb (see Chapter Two, pp. 63-136), with its “limping” line end. But even in choliamb, this effect is very different. Since there is no structural difference between one choliamb and the next, successive choliamb stagger ever forwards. In the elegiac distich, the pentameter line *responds to* but is structurally *distinct from* the hexameter line; each hemiepes both hesitates *and* looks backwards, attempting but failing to complete an epic line.¹⁸ So Luck: “instead of rolling along majestically, it suddenly stops and reverses, becoming its own echo. ... instead of reaching out to embrace the world, [the pentameter]

¹⁷ For a total, of course, of five feet.

¹⁸ Heinze 1919, p. 76, refers to elegiac halting as a “Kurzatmigkei,” a shortness of breath; see Barchiesi 1997, p. 23 and Morgan 2012, p. 207.

hesitates, it reconsiders and ends on an abrupt final note – whose abruptness is softened immediately by the renewal of the rolling beat in the following hexameter.”¹⁹

When Catullus “looks backwards” in stichic meters, it is typically via repetition of a line which accrues further nuances from the intervening lines. For example, the initial threat in poem 16, *pedicabo ego vos et irrumabo*, is expanded upon and problematized before being repeated in the final line, where it has a different character (see Chapter Three above, esp. pp. 168-181). Rather than an unflinching assertion of Catullus’ virility, the very same words have become fraught: if poet and poetry are split, as the intervening lines argue, how can the threat possibly be taken seriously?

In the elegiac distich, there is a tension between the hexameter line’s epic associations and the pentameter, which at its most basic level is simply *not* epic, and is sometimes employed specifically to undercut and contrast with the hexameter. So Ovid *Amores* 1.1.1-2 above: the first line is wholly epic both in meter and in matter, but the meter of the second line forces an immediate reappraisal of the first. Once the reader knows that the second line is a pentameter, the imperfect tense of *parabam* at the end of line 1 gels into an incipient rather than a continuous meaning (“I began to prepare” rather than “I was preparing”). There is also a tripartite tension between the two sides of the pentameter (*B* and *C* above) and the hexameter line (*A*). The common pairing of *materia* and *modis* is undercut because of the failure of the *modus* to match the *materia*; this is precisely in contradistinction to the effect of the hexameter line, which *does* match matter to meter. So Morgan:

¹⁹ Luck 1969, p. 28; cf. Morgan 2012, p. 206.

Elegy is a metrical scheme in which ... the hexameter and pentameter, an ill-sorted couple, nevertheless achieved union: balance and imbalance are principles to which the elegiac couplet seems instinctively drawn. ... [T]he mismatch of verses within the elegiac couplet was always capable of enshrining the dubious morals of the poetry it carried. ... [I]n elegy that polarity was hard-wired into a metrical system which shackled hexameter and pentameter together, giving their partnership the singular dynamic that comes from having a lot in common as well as irreconcilable differences.²⁰

Morgan overstates the case somewhat; the pentameter line is a variant of the hexameter line, so is not as distinct from it as the alternating hexameter and iambic meters of (for example) Horace *Epode* 15 are from one another.²¹ The elegiac couplet was also extremely versatile, like hendecasyllables—so much so that to pin down elegy as a genre is almost impossible—yet, unlike hendecasyllables, it was also extremely common. There is instead a dynamic tension between the hexameter and pentameter lines; they go together, but are just different enough to force an active generic interaction, typically characterized as a rising and falling or speeding and slowing from hexameter to pentameter line.²²

Characteristics of the Catullan Elegiac Epigram

In terms of Catullus' actual usage, Fain points out that the elegiac epigrams "are more likely [than his stichic poems] to be general rather than particular or momentary, and logical rather than episodic."²³ This makes good structural sense, as logical paired propositions (if/then, either/or, main clause/subordinate clause, etc.) fit very well in the elegiac couplet: with pentameter easily responding to or playing off of the hexameter;

²⁰ Morgan 2012, pp. 215-217.

²¹ See Johnson 2012, pp. 142-144.

²² So Gaisser 2009, pp. 86-87.

²³ Fain 2008, p. 24.

with the second hemiepes responding to the first in just the pentameter line; or with an entire couplet responding to another entire couplet (identified below as types X, Y, and Z, respectively). Catullus has many examples of all of these throughout the elegiac epigrams (though type Y is least common):

- X) *quare aut crudelem nasorum interfice pestem,
aut admirari desine cur fugiunt.*
Catullus 69.9-10

*Odi et amo. quare id faciam, fortasse requiris.
nescio, sed fieri sentio et excrucior.*
Catullus 85

- Y) *Ionios fluctus, postquam illuc Arrius isset,
iam non Ionios || esse sed Hionios.*
Catullus 84.11-12

*prata arva ingentes silvas altasque paludes
usque ad Hyperboreos || et mare ad Oceanum?*
Catullus 115.5-6

- Z) *Nulli se dicit mulier mea nubere malle
quam mihi, non si se Iuppiter ipse petat.
dicit; sed mulier cupido quod dicit amanti,
in vento et rapida scribere oportet aqua.*
Catullus 70

*Quinti, si tibi vis oculos debere Catullum
aut aliud si quid carius est oculis,
eripere ei noli, multo quod carius illi
est oculis, seu quid carius est oculis*
Catullus 82

Type Z is obviously limited to poems with more than one couplet.

The pretense that some response by target or addressee is expected, common in the stichic polymetric poems with their repeated questions (e.g. 52.1 & 4), is obviated by

what Fain calls the “rhetorical scaffolding” of the elegiac epigram.²⁴ The elegiac epigram tends towards a declarative ending of some sort, no matter what logical propositions are put forth in the meantime. This sense of finality is probably an outgrowth of the traditional uses of the meter for sepulchral or dedicatory epigrams, which in their original form were meant to inform bypassers rather than engage them in dialogue. Fain traces this compositional tactic (among others) from Theognis to Asclepiades to Callimachus and finally to Catullus himself.²⁵ As Morelli notes, however,

the rhetorical structure of many [of Catullus’] poems ... is not as ‘closed’ as in Hellenistic epigram. Yet even in such cases, differences from Theognidean elegiac sketches are apparent: the epigrammatic taste for unity and symmetry is always present in Catullus.²⁶

Beyond structure, Catullus’ “conceiv[ing] of epigram as an open form”²⁷ allows Catullus the option of using the elegiac epigram *primarily* for invective content, tapping (as I suggest) both into Roman popular and political invective²⁸ and into Archilochus as elegiac/iambic model.

I argue that Catullus treats the inherently unbalanced meter, which links hexameter and pentameter in a dynamic relationship, as an appropriate metrical structure for the portrayal of relationships that are similarly out of balance—or at least relationships that Catullus wants to *portray* as out of balance. These unbalanced relationships include a staggering amount of what Catullus depicts as sexual misconduct, often involving Lesbia’s or (less often) Juventius’ relationships with other men, or

²⁴ Fain 2008, p. 135.

²⁵ Fain 2008, pp. 65-138; cf. Morelli 2007, p. 536.

²⁶ Morelli 2007, p. 537.

²⁷ Morelli 2007, p. 537.

²⁸ See Ruffell 2003, pp. 44-61.

allegations of incest or the *os impurum*, but they also involve other power imbalances—again, according to Catullus—such as when those he considers rustic or provincial aspire to poetic (e.g. poems 96 and 105) or stylistic (84 and 97) ambitions, which are all areas Catullus, the consummate urban sophisticate, defends as if his own personal walled garden.²⁹

In his elegiac epigrams, Catullus weds rhetorical “unity and symmetry”³⁰ to a meter “on unequal footing with itself,”³¹ pairing the stately hexameter with the halting pentameter; he also employs a “socio-linguistic framework ... which is resolutely Roman” in its register.³² This, I argue, is all part of a strategy that seeks to create a sense of familiarity in the reader that is nonetheless tinged with unease; the Roman register, the logical structure, and the elegiac meter itself, as old in Rome as the hexameter (both were used by Ennius), all combine to lull the reader into a frame of mind wherein it seems perfectly reasonable to accept Catullus’ often cheeky or obscene positions, on their face outrageous or ridiculous (for example, that Gellius and his mother are obviously committing incest in order to create a magus in poem 90, or that Lesbia’s insults against Catullus in her husband’s presence betray her sublimated passion in poem 83). In other words, the generic expectation for elegy, inasmuch as there is one, is the conveyance of facts; this is a natural expectation for a meter used so commonly in epigraphic contexts,

²⁹ The Priapic imagery this metaphor calls up is *à propos*, considering the sexual nature of much of the invective Catullus deploys in defense of this space.

³⁰ Morelli 2007, p. 537.

³¹ Thorsen 2013, p. 375.

³² Watson 2006, p. 44.

where the point was to let a passerby know the facts about a deceased person (sepulchral epigram) or a votive object (dedicatory epigram).³³

Because of the more limited possibilities inherent in a two-line structure, I will demonstrate how Catullus deploys invective in several representative single-couplet epigrams before moving on to two longer, more complex poems, 74 and 90 (on the incestuous Gellius) and one of the longest outright attacks, poem 97 (on the filthy-mouthed Aemilius).

Single-Couplet Epigrams

*Mentula conatur Pipleium scandere montem:
Musae furcillis praecipitem eiciunt.*

Cock strives to climb the Piplean mount:
the Muses with pitchforks drive him out headlong.
Catullus 105

Of Catullus' six poems consisting of a single couplet (85, 93, 94, 105, 106, and 112), all but poem 85 are attacks.³⁴ Poem 105 is an excellent example of Morgan's characterization of Catullus' elegies as "exploiting the contrast inherent in the elegiac couplet."³⁵ The traditional epic-heroic associations of the hexameter line are responded to and mocked by the less-lofty pentameter line—less lofty in that (most simply) the pentameter is *not epic*, by dint of stylistic differences (should a poet choose to employ them), and most literally by its appearance physically lower on the page.³⁶ The most

³³ So Horace *Ars Poetica* 75-76.

³⁴ Poem 85, *odi et amo*, depicts Catullus as out of balance with himself, though the reason behind it is his powerlessness in his relationship with Lesbia.

³⁵ Morgan 2010b, p. 361, following Quinn 1973 [1970], p. 445.

³⁶ In other words, the "lofty" is often contrasted with the "base" both in tone and in physical position.

traditional distinction, which Ovid will inherit, is epic/not-epic; this is particularly à propos for Mentula, who in this reading is bad at epic poetry and is thus rejected by the Muses:³⁷

Mamurra's high aspirations and humiliation are also expressed in the contrasting linguistic registers of the two lines, the elevated antonomasia of 'Piplean mount' contradicted by the proverbial expression that is used for Mamurra's expulsion and the colloquial term *furcilla*. ... [W]hat the aspirational hexameter asserts, the dissident voice of the pentameter takes away³⁸

Few of Catullus' epigrams are so overtly concerned with epic poetry *per se*,³⁹ but the combination of high-register hexameter deflated by a more down-to-earth pentameter line is common, and aids in stressing the inappropriateness of Mamurra's ascent.⁴⁰ In poem 105, Mamurra/*mentula* belongs nowhere near the Muses, presumably not only because of his lack of literary skills, but because the Muses were typically thought to be unmarried and virginal. The word *mons* used in the sense of *mons Veneris* seems to be postclassical, but there is no mistaking the imagery, at least as it applies to the *mentula*: when "Prick"

³⁷ Cf. Richlin 1992 [1983], p. 162, where Mentula is a kind of failed Priapus, who in *Priapea* 2 "excludes the Muses from his garden."

³⁸ Morgan 2010b, p. 362.

³⁹ Poem 95 is an exception; in lines 7-8, the *Volusi annales* of the hexameter line are degraded in the pentameter line, where they *laxas scombris ... dabunt tunicas* ("they'll be used as loose wrappings for fish"), and in lines 9-10, the *Zmyrna's parva monimenta* ("small monument") is put on the hexameter line, in contrast with *tumido ... Antimacho* ("bloated Antimachus") on the pentameter line. The implication is that Cinna's *Zmyrna* is worthy of the traditional metrical preeminence of the heroic meter, whereas more traditional epics can be relegated to the pentameter if they fail to measure up stylistically; Volusius' *Annales* are referred to as *cacata carta* in poem 36, and Antimachus (*fl.* at the end of the 5th C BCE) belongs in the pentameter line because of his poor reputation as a poet (he wrote an epic *Thebais* as well as, appropriately, an elegiac work called the *Lyde*).

⁴⁰ As in poem 112's description of a *multus homo* whom every other *multus homo* avoids, where the pentameter line actually begins with *descendit*.

approaches the Muses' *mons*, the Muses fight it off by throwing it out "head first" (*praecipitem eiciunt*, l. 2).⁴¹

Because of the incongruous initial appearance of *Mentula* at the beginning of the hexameter line, the *Musae* abandon the hexameter for the pentameter; initial subjects beginning with *M*-, one male and one female, balance each other on unequal lines, and each subject is out of place on the line in which it appears:

Mentula conatur Pipleium scandere montem:

— — | — — | — || — ∪ ∪ | — ∪ ∪ x

Musae furcillis praecipitem eiciunt.

Catullus 105

The heavy, spondaic "false start" at the beginning of the pentameter line (*Musae furcillis*) nonetheless is itself aurally distinct from the following elided *praecipitem eiciunt*. The sped-up dactylic rhythm mirrors *Mentula*'s swift tumble down the mountain.⁴² Compare Ovid *Amores* 1.1.17-18, which rises in the hexameter (*bene surrexit*) and diminishes in the pentameter (*attenuat ... nervos meos*), a sexual metaphor where the hexameter line is conceived of as masculine, the pentameter as feminine.⁴³ *Mentula*'s attempt "to ascend/scan"⁴⁴ (*scandere*, l. 1) the mountain ends in a failure of epic scansion: the pentameter.

Poem 94, also about Mamurra, is deceptively simple:

⁴¹ Cf. Adams 1982, pp. 72-73, on *caput* as a word for the glans. Boughner 1983 has similar ideas about the poem, but goes too far into Freudian analysis, equating the Muses' *furcillae* with the concept of the *vagina dentata*.

⁴² See Granarolo 1967, pp. 123-125.

⁴³ Thorsen 2013, p. 375.

⁴⁴ Morgan 2010b points out the alternate meaning for *scandere* (p. 362), but is hesitant about its significance here.

*Mentula moechatur. moechatur mentula? certe.
hoc est quod dicunt: ipsa olera olla legit.*

Cock fornicates. A fornicating cock? Sure enough
this is what they say: the pot picks its own vegetables.
Catullus 94⁴⁵

It is a logically balanced couplet. The hexameter provides a two-word assertion in 2½ feet, expresses feigned incredulity at the assertion by flipping the same words in a *metrically* flipped 2½ feet (dactyl – spondee – long becomes long – spondee – dactyl), and confirms the initial assertion in the final foot. The pentameter provides further evidence for the assertion with a spondaic appeal to common knowledge (2½ feet), which introduces the following musical, heavily elided aphorism (2½ feet): “the pot itself picks its pot herbs.”⁴⁶ In other words, each chooses what is most appropriate for itself; for a *mentula* (“a prick”) to commit adultery is most appropriate.⁴⁷

However, the structure of this couplet reveals stylistic mockery. Though adultery in a Roman context is not uncommon (indeed, Catullus’ own relationship with Lesbia is adulterous), for *others* to commit adultery violates the *mores* of the Catullan corpus, where Catullus’ adultery with Lesbia is described in terms of marriage and *fides*, but Lesbia’s liaisons with anyone else are described as adulterous. For Mentula to commit adultery *in those terms* is crass and unstylish, and the structure carefully reflects this. Even the hexameter line mimics the pentameter:

⁴⁵ I follow Mynors 1960 [1958] in placing a period after *certe*, but see Thomson 1997 [1978] *ad loc.*

⁴⁶ The word *olla* is a metaphor for the pudenda (Adams 1982, pp. 86-87); *olera* is much less certain as a metaphor for the phallus.

⁴⁷ Thomson 1997 [1978] *ad loc.*

_ u u | _ _ | _ || _ | _ _ | _ u u | _ x
Mentula moechatur. moechatur mentula? certe.
 Catullus 94.1

Mentula moechatur is a hemiepes with the aural quality of a jingle, and the third-foot caesura coincides with a sense-pause. Reversing the word order in a quantitative equivalent to a hemiepes does not affect the catchiness of the pithy phrase. But the spondaic *certe* in the final foot sounds particularly comedic: “sure!” This is borne out in the pentameter line, with its stolid, spondaic assertion of popular opinion (*hoc est quod dicunt*). This opinion’s worth is deflated by the sing-song, rustic and heavily elided proverb in the pentameter (*ipsa olera olla legit*), implying that Mamurra’s behavior is similarly unsophisticated.⁴⁸ As I mentioned earlier, the two halves of the pentameter are distinguished by the contrast between *dicunt* and *legit*; but more than that, I suggest that the hexameter and pentameter proverbs actually contradict one another. The meaning of *ipsa olera olla legit* hinges on the pot’s *choosing* what best suits it; this is manifestly not the *modus operandi* of Mamurra, who elsewhere is described as unable to contain his appetites (as in poems 29 and 57). Sure (*certe*), *Mentula moechatur*; but what Catullus has a problem with (and consequently mocks) is that *Mentula* does so indiscriminately.

Mentula’s superior and partner in poems 29 and 57 is Caesar, whom Catullus addresses directly in poem 93:

Nil nimium studeo, Caesar, tibi velle placere,
nec scire utrum sis albus an ater homo.

⁴⁸ Cf. poem 22 (in Chapter Two at pp. 85-99), whose final proverb similarly tars Suffenus with rusticity. I am not suggesting that elegy *per se* is necessarily unsophisticated, and am hesitant to assert (with Ross 1969) that Catullus’ elegiac epigrams are generally unsophisticated (without much in the way of Roman predecessors to compare him to, but with highly polished successors, of course they seem so), but I do think that the seeming lack of sophistication is deliberate and serves a purpose, whether particular as in this case (to mock Mamurra) or general (as I suggest above at pp. 192-196, following Watson 2006, p. 44).

I have no very great desire, Caesar, to want to make myself agreeable
to you, nor to know whether you are a white or black man.

Catullus 93

The poem's first line is similar to 94.1, isolating a two syllable word. Here, *Caesar* is put in "the most *unemphatic* position in the line," and therefore paradoxically emphasizes just how little Catullus cares.⁴⁹ As for *velle placere*, what exactly *is* it that would be pleasing to Caesar? The second line of poem 93 has been interpreted as referring to effeminacy, with *albus* equivalent to λευκός ("white," i.e. effeminate/depilated/pale) and *ater* to μέλας ("black," manly/unshaven/tanned).⁵⁰ Obviously the text expresses Catullus' indifference to Caesar—which seems more insane⁵¹ than conciliatory⁵²—but the sub-text of the pentameter line suggests a resumption of Catullus' iambic attacks on Caesar and, if it is read together with poem 94, Mamurra.⁵³ Catullus' affectation of indifference in the poem effectively keeps a relationship and reconciliation with Caesar from forming.

Poem 57 suggests that what is *truly* pleasing to Caesar is rampant adultery—itsself often taken as a sign of effeminacy; this is to bring up the familiar charge that Caesar was passive for Nicomedes of Bithynia, and a serial adulterer at home (as Calvus fr. 38 and Caesar's own soldiers assert).⁵⁴ Though Catullus purports not to care in poem 93, he shows his awareness of the appropriateness of both possibilities: Caesar might well be

⁴⁹ Thomson 1997 [1978] *ad loc.*

⁵⁰ Ingemann 1982; cf. Henderson 1991 [1975], pp. 211-212.

⁵¹ See Quintilian 11.1.38 and Tatum 2007, p. 344.

⁵² Skinner 2003, pp. 109-112, and Konstan 2007, p. 84, with further references.

⁵³ Skinner 2003, p. 113.

⁵⁴ See Ruffell 2003, pp. 48-49; for the fragments, see Hollis 2007, pp. 56 & 82-83; the Calvus fragment is fr. 17 in Courtney 2003 [1993]: *Bithynia quicquid et / pedicator Caesaris umquam habuit.*

albus (making Mamurra *ater*, considering his active role in adultery in poem 94), but in poem 57 they are equally active, and so *ater* is just as apt.⁵⁵

Midlength Epigrams: The Incestuous Gellius

The epigrams against Gellius⁵⁶ (poems 74, 80, 88-91, and 116) are all of middling length, ranging from six to ten lines each; they typically use the pentameter to undercut the hexameter in any given couplet, and often present insult as fact via distancing language. There seem to be twin reasons for Catullus' attacks on Gellius, revealed in poems 91 and 116. Poem 91 reveals that Gellius slept with Lesbia; Catullus elsewhere portrays Gellius as delighting in incest (poems 74, 80, and 88-91), so Catullus thought Lesbia safe. Because Gellius and Catullus were so close (*et quamvis tecum multo coniungerer usu*, l. 7), however, Gellius considers Lesbia close enough to taboo to make the crime worth his while (*tu satis id duxti*, l. 9).

Poem 116 promises attacks on Gellius in return for Gellius' attacks on Catullus (*contra nos tela ista tua evitabimus acta, / at fixus nostris tu dabis supplicium*, ll. 7-8). This has been interpreted as a precursor to the other poems (so Thomson) or as the obvious conclusion of the sequence, instantiating a failed gift exchange in counterpoint with poem 65 (so Tatum).⁵⁷ If Tatum's reading is correct, poem 116 reveals Catullus as an *amicus inferior* in a deteriorated patron-client relationship. The nature of the patron-client relationship is a joining of social unequals, making it a perfect fit for the elegiac

⁵⁵ The two distichs can be read together as deliberately ambiguous; Caesar could be seen either way, either using his *mentula*/*Mentula* to commit adultery (as in poem 94), or as a *cinaedus*.

⁵⁶ Gellius has been identified as L. Gellius Poplicola, who seems to have been involved with the suit against Caelius (see Thomson 1997 [1978], p. 497).

⁵⁷ Thomson 1997 [1978] *ad loc.* and Tatum 1997, pp. 497-500 (cf. MacLeod 1973).

given information that it could not possibly know as if it were fact: something that Gellius—*not* the author—had heard (*Gellius audierat*, l. 1). The habitual nature of what he had heard, that his “uncle was accustomed to scold” (*patruum obiurgare solere*) further distances the assertion, giving it a ring of truth. It also plays into the familiar stock character of the censorious uncle, and indeed Gellius’ uncle “behav[es] in predictable, intensely acculturated ways.”⁶⁰ The following pentameter line, though it is kept general and potential (“if anyone,” *si quis*) zeroes in on what exactly causes the uncle’s intervention: *delicias*, just before the diaeresis. This word calls to mind the early hendecasyllable poems (2, 3, and 6), which use the same words. But in each of these cases, *deliciae* refers to a person; here, the other half of the pentameter identifies it as something a person can say or do (*diceret aut faceret*). Speech and action are in effect given the same weight, balanced as they are in the same half of the pentameter line, taking up the same space with “or” in between (dactyl + *aut* + anapest).

These seemingly equal concepts soon go out of balance, as Gellius will end up making use of actions to put a stop to speech. Faced with the problem of the first couplet, Gellius engages in what seems a very logical reaction in order to solve it: he commits adultery with his aunt, his uncle’s wife.

*hoc ne ipsi accideret, patroi perdepsuit ipsam
uxorem et patruum reddidit Harpocraten.
Catullus 74.3-4*

Note that *uxorem* is delayed until the beginning of line 4; as for Rufa in poem 59 (*Bononiensis Rufa Rifulum fellat / uxor Meneni*), the delay of “wife” makes Gellius’

⁶⁰ Watson 2006, p. 43.

Much like lines 3 and 5 of poem 74, the first two hexameter lines of poem 90 balance one another. Line 1 ends in *nefando*, which seems to be diametrically opposed to line 3's *oportet*, in the same metrical *sedes*. Aural links too run between the successive hexameter lines (*Na-/na-/gna-* in lines 1, 3, and 5; *ex, ex* in lines 1 and 3), and line 1's *magus ex Gelli matris* is functionally equivalent to line 3's *magus ex matre et gnato*.⁶⁶ The foreign character (*Persicum* and *Persarum*, ll. 2 & 4) of the belief that an incestuous union between mother and son produces a magus is nevertheless presented in Roman terms (*nefando, coniugio, aruspicium, impia*, and *relligio*, ll. 1-4)

Although the weighty *nefando* (an epic word in Catullus, later taken up by Vergil, not to mention every post-Vergilian Latin epic)⁶⁷ is immediately rendered more terrible by *coniugio*, the first word in the pentameter (l. 2, enjambed like *uxorem* at 74.4), it is also confirmed, for indeed a union between mother and son is unspeakable. *Oportet* ("it is proper," l. 3), on the other hand, is immediately punctured by the first words in the following pentameter, *si vera est* ("if it is true," l. 4), since the *Persarum impia relligio* is without a doubt false, as the oxymoronic phrase underscores. Thus we have a balanced construction of unequal assertions.

These assertions are nonetheless given logical distance. Gellius sleeps with his mother, and there must be a reason: the birth of a *magus*. Therefore "let the *magus* be born" (*nascatur magus*, l. 1) "let him learn Persian haruspicy" (*discat Persicum aruspicium*, l. 2). So long as *vera est ... relligio* ("the religious observance is true," l. 4),

⁶⁶ It is also metrically equivalent, but the phrases are in different *sedes*.

⁶⁷ Catullus 64.397 and Vergil *Georgics* 1.278 & *Aeneid* 1.543, 2.155, 3.653, 5.785, 6.26, 10.84, 12.572, all in exactly the same metrical *sedes*. It also appears in a different *sedes* at Catullus 64.405 and twice in Tibullus *Elegies* at 1.5.42 and 2.6.18, interestingly both in the pentameter line.

then what should be a monstrosity is proper (*oportet*, l. 3). This is distinctly different in character from the concatenation of similar words in Catullus' epyllion:

ignaro mater substernens se impia nato
impia non verita est divos scelerare penates.
omnia fanda nefanda malo permixta furore 405
iustificam nobis mentem avertere deorum.

the unnatural mother impiously coupling with her
 unconscious son
 did not fear to pollute her family gods:
 then all right and wrong, confounded in impious madness, 405
 turned from us the righteous will of the gods.
 Catullus 64.403-406

The circumstances are remarkably similar: here the union of mother and son is at the end of a list of human relationships turned topsy-turvy, as the Heroic Age gives way to the Iron. Here, the mother is *impia*, the son *ignarus*, whereas in poem 90 there is distancing: it is only the custom that is actually said to be *impia*, not those who participate in it. That which is openly stated in poem 64, *omnia fanda nefanda malo permixta furore* ("all things speakable, all unspeakable were mixed up in a wicked frenzy," 64.405), is not true for poem 90.

In the epigram, though the whole concept of incest is *nefandum*, the structure is finely tuned; there is no *furor*, no reverential dread (*verita est*, 64.404), only the veneration of the final couplet (*veneretur*, 90.5). The final hexameter, though, is again undercut by the pentameter, as the *carmen* (a dig at Gellius' literary tastes?) to be sacrificed on the fire is written (according to Thomson and Skinner)⁶⁸ on the *omentum*.

⁶⁸ Thomson 1997 [1973], pp. 519-520, suggests that *pingue* is meant to recall poetry opposed to the Callimachean ideal, and that *omentum* is a type of paper made from the fatty tissue around the intestines. Cf. Skinner 2003, p. 87, who links this to the programmatic reading of poem 116.

*quem siqua attingit, non illam posse putemus
aegroti culum lingere carnificis?*

I didn't—gods help me!—think it made any difference
whether I sniffed at Aemilius' mouth or his arse.
That's not cleaner than this, nor this dirtier than that;
in fact his arse is cleaner and better,
for it has no teeth. His mouth has teeth a foot and a half
long, 5
gums like a worn-out cart-frame,
and, on top of all, a gaping jaw like the open
slit of a pissing mule in summer.
He fucks many a woman and makes himself out a charmer,
and yet is not handed over to the grinding-mill and the
donkey? 10
Aren't we to think a girl who touches him capable
of licking the arse of a hangman with dysentery?
Catullus 97⁷¹

One of the most obscene poems in the corpus, poem 97 relates Aemilius' mouth to his ass (*utrumne os an culum*, l. 2), and finds the former wanting. His “ass is cleaner and better” (*culus mundior et melior*, l. 4), whereas his mouth, always open (l. 7), is gap-toothed and smelly. Aemilius' interpretation of his stylishness, based solely on sex, is also out of balance with Catullus' interpretation; Aemilius considers himself *venustus* and has sex with many women, but the type of woman who would sleep with him is characterized as also having an *os impurum* (l. 12). Aemilius' self-characterization as *venustus* and Catullus' emphasis on his filthy mouth strongly ties this poem to similar themes in poem 37; just as Egnatius thinks his beard makes him *bonus* (and so part of the in-group), so Aemilius thinks his sexual escapades make him *venustus*, revealing his provincialism (see below). The move from *multas* (l. 9) to *illam* (l. 11) suggests that

⁷¹ Text from Thomson 1997 [1978] except l. 2 *utrumne* for *utrum*, following Avancius' emendation (see Quinn 1973 [1970] *ad loc.*)

Catullus has a particular woman in mind (perhaps Lesbia) and that she is being targeted for her bad taste, disgustingly instantiated in the final line.

The first couplet is metrically odd: the first line only scans with hiatus between *di* and *ament*, making *di* a short syllable,⁷² and in the mss. the second begins with *utrum os*, causing hiatus at the diaeresis:

_ _|_ _|_ ||_ ∪ ∪| _ ∪|X
utrum os an culum || olfacerem Aemilio.
 Catullus 97.2

If we add Avancius' 16th-century emendation (suggested with the purpose of avoiding this hiatus), *utrumne*, we have instead an elision over the diaeresis:

_ _| _ _| _ || _ ∪ ∪| _ ∪|X
utrumne os an culum olfacerem Aemilio.
 Catullus 97.2

Editors of Catullus have ranged from letting every instance of hiatus stand to trying to remove it wherever possible.⁷³ Zicàri finds this particular emendation hard to swallow on the grounds that a similar “well-defined type” of hiatus (“a short syllable terminating in – *m* which is lengthened *in arsi*”) occurs twice more (at 67.44 and 76.10), and that adding – *ne* would “lead to a bridging of the diaeresis and increase the number of atypical instances of this kind of structure.”⁷⁴ I doubt that this argument is strong enough on its own to dispense with the emendation, and suggest that we instead look at what hiatus or elision add to the meaning of the poem.

⁷² Quinn 1973 [1970] *ad loc.*

⁷³ So Goold 1958.

⁷⁴ Zicàri 1964, p. 202. Of fifteen examples of elision over the diaeresis, five involve –*que* or *atque*, six involve an emphatic word (either a form of *omnis* or a demonstrative), and—though this explains little—three of the remaining ones are from poems against Gellius (pp. 194-197). For the rarity of elision over the diaeresis after Catullus see Platnauer 1951, pp. 87-88.

First of all, this poem, like many other Catullan epigrams, purports to offer up an objectively posed, equal choice which, upon closer inspection, is neither objective nor equal.⁷⁵ Aemilius is going to be insulted either way; the “objectivity” Catullus provides is in giving a fair hearing to whether Aemilius’ ass or mouth is less disgusting. It is not until line 9 that this conceit is dropped, as the attack on Aemilius becomes more wide-ranging, encompassing his seemingly unrelated sexual habits. Although the first two couplets each contain separate complete thoughts, lines 2-3 are dedicated to the comparison between Aemilius’ ass and mouth. Line 4 actually responds to the first line’s assertion of objectivity, which is in effect a hypothesis that both orifices are equal (*non .. quicquam referre putavi*, “I didn’t think it mattered at all,” l. 1), and presents it as a surprise, an almost scientifically serendipitous discovery, that actually the *culus* is *mundior et melior* (“his ass is cleaner and better,” l. 4).

If line 2 is read with an elision, *culum_olfacerem*, it would subtly set up the outcome of this “fair and balanced” investigation. The elision brings into uncomfortably close quarters the ass of Aemilius and the nose of Catullus, which, as it turns out, is surprisingly preferable to the alternative. This reading is bolstered by the further elision of *olfacerem_Aemilio*, with the result that all three words become intimately connected, each “wafting” into the next: *culum_olfacerem_Aemilio*. If there were hiatus instead, the act of smelling would be disjoined from the smelled object, but Catullus would still be connected to Aemilius, the point of which is unclear. One caveat to reading an elision,

⁷⁵ Cf. Solodow 1989, p. 317, who (on poem 95) asserts that Catullus’ allowance of a comparison seems to “promise ... a measure of objectivity,” though this objectivity is of course illusory. The appearance of fairness is all the more unassailable when “Catullus is strictly even-handed in the allotment of space: a couplet to one, a couplet to the other,” etc.

however, is that this makes it more difficult for Catullus to sidestep the question of what he is doing smelling Aemilius' various orifices in the first place. There is little doubt that it happened; *olfacerem* is subjunctive because of the indirect question, not because the circumstances are hypothetical, and *verum etiam* in line 4 suggests strongly that *culus mundior et melior* [*est*], rather than [*sit*] (and indeed, in the following lines, the empirical evidence piles up). But I suggest that Catullus paradoxically thwarts being tainted with the *os impurum* in two ways. First, by placing *os* in line 2 further away from *olfacerem* than *culum*, Catullus keeps what turns out to be the more disgusting choice as far away from his nose as possible, keeping Aemilius' literal *os impurum* at a distance. On the other hand, he doubles down on the metaphorical *os impurum* by letting fly the greatest concentration of "taboo" words in any of his poems.⁷⁶ Catullus keeps a strong, unapologetic focus on the striking imagery of Aemilius' repulsiveness, which is so outrageous to contemplate that it effectively distracts from any consideration about how what is spoken might reflect on the speaker.

The next pair of couplets (ll. 5-8) provide evidence for the revelation that Aemilius' *culus* is "cleaner and better" than his mouth. First, there is pure logic: the *culus* "is without teeth" (*nam sine dentibus est*, l. 5 before the third-foot caesura), whereas the *os* has "teeth a foot-and-a-half long" (*hoc dentis sesquipedalis*, l. 5 after the

⁷⁶ See Whatmough 1956, pp. 29-55. Catullus uses *culus* three times (ll. 2, 4, and 12), *meio* and *cunus* once each (l. 8), all in pentameter lines, and *fuit* once in the hexameter (l. 9). I suggest that *fuit*, implying active/traditionally masculine sexual activity, is given "heroic" pride of place in the hexameter line over the passive/feminine/feminized body parts in the pentameter lines. As for *culus* and *cunus*, position in the line mirrors actual anatomy; though the words are metrically equivalent, *culus* appears each time in the same metrical *sedes* just before the diaeresis, whereas the only appearance of *cunus* is just after.

caesura).⁷⁷ The observation is bolstered by analogy with truly arresting imagery:

Aemilius' os "has the gums of an old shit-wagon" (*gingivas vero ploxeni habet veteris*, l. 6),⁷⁸ and "furthermore, he has a grin just like the spread-out cunt of a pissing mule tends to have in (the) heat" (*praeterea rictum, qualem diffusus in aestu / meientis mulae cunnus habere solet*, ll. 7-8).

The next couplet takes an abrupt turn towards crime and punishment:

*hic futuit multas et se facit esse venustum;
et non pistrino traditur atque asino?* 10
Catullus 97.9-10

As O'Bryhim realizes, Catullus charges Aemilius with two separate but related crimes in the hexameter, and suggest a separate punishment for each in the pentameter (forming a chiasmus of crime and punishment): Aemilius is to be given over to a donkey, who will do to him what he does to *multas*, and to the mill as the appropriate punishment for lying, specifically about being *venustus*.⁷⁹

O'Bryhim also suggests Aemilius' self-characterization as *venustus* is offensive to Catullus' literary sensibilities: "If *venustus* has literary connotations in Poem 97, then the aphrodisiac that draws women to Aemilius is not a scent like that produced by a female

⁷⁷ It is tempting to look for a metrical "foot" pun in *sesquipedalis* (*semis* + *que* + *pedalis*, literally "a half and a foot-long"). Taking it as "excessively long" makes more sense; the word itself is actually longer than 1½ feet long and, as Hutchinson 2003 points out, a word this long is highly unusual at the end of Catullus' hexameter (p. 213). Cf. Horace *Ars Poetica* 97: *sesquipedalia verba* (roughly equivalent to "ten-dollar words").

⁷⁸ Whatmough 1956, pp. 48-49, identifies the type of wagon; if he is right, this would certainly add to the surprise that one orifice smells like the other ought to. The idea is that gaps in the wagon's planks appear as it ages.

⁷⁹ O'Bryhim 2012, pp. 151-152, with further references; these punishments, separate in his view, have often been considered two parts of the same punishment (*pistrinum* as mill, *asinus* as either the animal that turns the mill wheel or as a word for part of the mill-stone; see Ellis 1889 [1876] *ad loc.*).

mule in heat, but rather poetry that many women have found seductive.”⁸⁰ A small quibble with this view: neither of the actions in line 9 is presented as logically prior to the other, except as can be inferred by position in the line. Going by position, it is not that Aemilius makes himself *venustus* in order that he may *futuit multas* (“fucks many women”)—as O’Byrhim suggests, if Aemilius is Aemilius Macer, the contention would be that he shifts from didactic poetry to erotic poetry, “the one type of verse that could be expected to draw the sexual attention of women”⁸¹—but that Aemilius *futuit multas*, thereby making himself seem *venustus*.⁸²

O’Byrhim certainly has it right that “[w]hat angers Catullus is Aemilius’ misappropriation of the word *venustus*.”⁸³ But the problem is that Aemilius, whatever his actual identity, is clearly from the Po Valley, which Catullus hints at by using the provincial word *ploxenum* (Quint. 1.5.8). Aemilius tries to fit in at Rome, but ends up behaving inappropriately; *how* he behaves inappropriately is based on a misunderstanding of what *venustus* means to Catullus and the *poetae novi*. Presumably, usage changes faster in Rome, the center of literary production, and it takes some time for new usages to radiate outwards to the provinces.⁸⁴ This may be the case with *venustus*, the meaning of

⁸⁰ O’Byrhim 2012, p. 153.

⁸¹ O’Byrhim 2012, p. 154. Neudling 1950, p. 1, suggests that the Aemilius of this poem might be identified either as M. Aemilius Lepidus or as L. Aemilius Paullus, but see below on the provincial implications of *ploxenum*.

⁸² Cf. poem 37.19, where Egnatius’ *opaca barba* makes him appear *bonus*, a case of physical hypocrisy (Corbeill 1996, pp. 170). The focus on teeth in poem 37 also points to a connection with 97. Both Egnatius and Aemilius appear to have positive attributes that on closer inspection only highlight the negative.

⁸³ O’Byrhim 2012, p. 155.

⁸⁴ Cf. De Mulder and Lamiroy 2012, p. 221: “[L]anguage changes will spread the fastest in situations where there is a lot of language contact between individuals with weak ties. ... [This] leads to at least one prediction, viz. that language change will evolve most rapidly in regions with a high degree of urbanization.”

which changes from something like “erotically enticing” or “sexually attractive” in Roman comedy to something more along the lines of “well-arranged and charming” in Catullus.⁸⁵ Krostenko likens the change in meaning of *venustus* to the word “queer” in English:

[O]nce a term of rebuke (‘odd,’ ‘strange’), by steady application to the same group of referents by friendly parties with a different view of sexuality, “queer” has become neutral or even (aggressively?) ameliorative (hence “queer theory,” “Queer Nation”). As theatricality and displays of artwork came to be viewed more and more positively, the *venust(us)* applied to them will have concomitantly come to seem less and less erotic.⁸⁶

There are two main ways to misuse the word *venustus* as Catullus conceives of it: by holding to the old-fashioned meaning and likewise to old-fashioned values (along the lines of the *senes severiores* of poem 5), who would view anything labeled *venustus* with mistrust;⁸⁷ and, for those who understand that to be *venustus* is a positive thing among the smart set, by failing to grasp fully the change in context.⁸⁸ Aemilius then in this reading falls into the latter category. As a provincial, he thinks active, physical eroticism (*hic futuit multas*, 97.9) is what makes someone *venustus*, not realizing that *venustus* has been divorced from the erotic among the *poetae novi*.

In the last couplet (ll. 11-12), it becomes clear, just as surprisingly as the earlier revelation that Aemilius’ ass is cleaner than his mouth, that Aemilius himself is not Catullus’ only target. Line 9’s first charge against Aemilius is complete by the third-foot caesura in the hexameter line:

⁸⁵ Krostenko 2001a, pp. 40-51.

⁸⁶ Krostenko 2001a, p. 50.

⁸⁷ Cf. Quinn 1973 [1970], p. 107: “let those too old to understand mind their own business!”

⁸⁸ Krostenko 2001a, pp. 236-239, identifies *venustas* as verbally-expressed cultivated attractiveness, more than physical beauty.

– ∪ ∪ – | – || ...
hic futuit multas ...

Catullus 97.9

In line 11, in the same part of the hexameter line (with the same third-foot caesura), the charge is repeated with a new defendant; it still concerns sexual misconduct, but Aemilius is no longer the active participant:

– – | – – | – || – | – – | – ∪ ∪ | – x
quem siqua attingit, non illam posse putemus
 – – | – | – || – ∪ ∪ | – ∪ ∪ | x
aegroti culum lingere carnificis?

Catullus 97.11-12

Instead, the “many” (*multas*) become particularized as *illam*. Whether this is meant to refer to Lesbia is unknown, but whoever *illa* is, she is conceived of by Catullus as being an active partner: “if some woman touches him, wouldn’t we think **that woman** able to lick the ass of a sick hangman?” Catullus’ descriptions of Lesbia’s sexual misconduct are starkly described as fact in the polymetrics (*quos simul complexa tenet trecentos ... identidem omnium ilia rumpens*, 11.18-20; *consedit istic*, 37.14; *glubit magnanimi Remi nepotes*, 58.5), but here the actual sexual act (*quem siqua attingit*) is combined with an element of purported objectivity, as is fitting for the meter. The word *putemus* implies cold calculation (recalling *putavi* in line 1), and *posse* pretends to create a distancing effect, as if to say: “I’m not saying that she *does* do this, just that she *could*.” The nature of the *potential* act, which partakes in the *os impurum* just as much as Aemilius himself, taints the actual act, so that they seem logically equivalent.

Catullus plays with balance and imbalance throughout poem 97. The unbalanced elegiac couplet first presents *culus* and *os*, which are not logically equivalent, as the same

(ll. 1-3); then, instead of defaulting to the logical view, the *culus* is pronounced *better* than the *os* (l. 4), with supporting evidence (ll. 5-8). Appropriate punishments are then suggested for Aemilius' crime, which is trying to fit in as *venustus* through fornication; there is a gap between Aemilius' and Catullus' understanding of *venustas*. The last two couplets are balanced between Aemilius' sexual activity and the degrading punishment it deserves (ll. 9-10) and Aemilius' partner's sexual activity and the degradation to which it is equivalent.

Conclusion

I argue that Catullus was drawn to the elegiac couplet as a meter appropriate for invective by its connection with Archilochus and by the dynamic tension inherent in the joining of the hexameter, with all its epic-heroic freight, with the hesitant pentameter and its "false starts." The type of invective it best fits holds the links that bind people together in relationships Catullus considers inappropriately out of balance up to a critical light. On a metrical level, the elegiac couplet's clearly defined parts are more suited than stichic meters to the presentation of arguments in logically balanced constructions, whether true or fallacious. This diminishes the sense that Catullus is reacting to various stimuli in an emotional way, making his assertions more believable, as does the familiarity of the Roman background.⁸⁹ This holds true even in poems that are more a demonstration of bitterness than an attack, as for the famous poem 85:

⁸⁹ Cf. Watson 2006. See also Uden 2006, p. 26, on poem 75: "There is ... a disjunction in Catullus 75 between pedantic rationality and emotional irrationality that is very reminiscent of comic *adulescentes*." Like the censorious uncle, this would be an extremely familiar image to a Roman audience. Cf. poem 8, where despite comic language the rambling emotional recollections at war with self-directed exhortations

_ u u | _ || _ | _ u u | _ || _ | _ u u | _ x
Odi et amo. quare id faciam, fortasse requiris.
 _ u u | _ u | _ || _ u u | _ u u | x
nescio, sed fieri sentio et excrucior.

I hate and I love. Why I do so, perhaps you ask.
 I know not, but I feel it, and I am in torment.
 Catullus 85

Despite the clearly emotional weight described in the poem (“I hate and I love,” “I feel and I am tortured”) the carefully segregated, balanced statements (*Odi et amo* before the hexameter’s 2nd-foot caesura, *sentio et excrucior* in the last half of the pentameter) gives it an air of detachment, making Catullus an objective observer of his own confused emotions.⁹⁰ When applied to invective, the abuse becomes much more difficult for targets or the audience to dismiss out of hand because it seems so reasonable. The unbalanced couplets, which often reveal contrasts from couplet to couplet or hexameter line to pentameter line,⁹¹ reflect by means of their very structure a deep concern with relationships that are out of balance, ranging from betrayal to incest. In his elegiac invective, Catullus exploits the meter’s structure to underscore these unbalanced relationships.

never coalesces in a rational way; Catullus’ fight against lovesickness is won or lost on his emotions (bolstered, as I argue in Chapter Two (pp. 111-122), by the choliambic meter as an attempted curative).

⁹⁰ Note that *odi et amo* are opposites but are clearly happening at the same time. This appears to be the same with *sentio et excrucior* due to the similar phrasing and the connective *et*, but in fact *sentio* includes both *odi et amo* and is logically prior to *excrucior*. This is exactly opposite to the presumed chronological sequence of events of Catullus’ affair with Lesbia, where *amor* is logically prior to *odium*.

⁹¹ Fain 2008, p. 75.

Conclusion

In this dissertation, I have attempted to demonstrate the extent to which the meaning of Catullus' poetry is constituted by a dynamic interplay between meter and invective content. By means of close readings I have shown how Catullus chooses certain meters for particular types of invective content, whether because they have traditional generic associations with particular authors of *iambos*, or because conforming to the structure of each particular meter tends to produce a certain desired effect. He thereby shapes preexisting genres into underexplored territory without breaking the traditional generic connection or causing his poems to seem unnatural.

In my first two chapters, I addressed the mismatch between Catullus' use of iambic meters and the seeming lack of invective in poems 4, 8, 22, 31, and 44. In Chapter One (pp. 19-62), I demonstrated that in poem 4 the iambic trimeter when it is pure, with no allowable substitutions, flows regularly and free of metrical hiccups except when Catullus uses caesurae to call attention to certain words and phrases; and that these lexical markers are associated with *iambos*' dominant feature, invective. In Chapter Two (pp. 63-136), I delineated the difference between Catullus' iambic trimeter and choliambic invective. I then showed in poem 37 how the unique "limping" effect at the end of the choliambic line serves to call special attention to the final foot, marking out whatever words are contained there as carefully chosen. Finally, I applied these same observations to the diagnostic choliambic poems, showing that similar effects are at play but turned towards different ends, in some cases connecting the poem back to Hipponax or

Callimachus, each of whom used the choliamb, and in some cases explaining Catullus' usage as directly tied to the shape of the meter.

In the following pair of chapters, I addressed the largest collections of meters, hendecasyllabic in Chapter Three (pp. 137-183) and elegiac couplets in Chapter Four (pp. 184-219), each of which also have extremely high concentrations of invective. The hendecasyllable's flexibility enabled Catullus to use it for erotic poems and invective poems, whether separately or in the same poem, though at the same time, as I argued, it revealed Catullus' potential vulnerability and in some cases necessitated preemptive abusive attacks or backpedaling to avoid the attacks of others. For the elegiac couplet, I demonstrated that the dynamic tension between content presented as logical and relatively free of emotion and the inherently balanced/unbalanced elegiac meter—where each couplet stands as a unit, but a unit yoked uneasily together and made up of subtly mismatched parts, both metrically and lexically—reflects the chosen content, relationships that Catullus sees as out of balance.

This investigation leaves open the question of invective in more unusual meters in Catullus' poetry, particularly poems 11 (in Sapphic stanzas), 17 (in Priapeans), and 30 (in Greater Asclepiadeans), though for the first two of these there are existing readings that at least touch on the importance of their metrical forms.¹ Close metrical readings of the omitted invective poems of Catullus, particularly the hendecasyllables and elegiac epigrams not covered in this treatment, would be beneficial, as would a broader application of the strategy not only beyond Catullan invective but to the remaining work

¹ See Putnam 1974 on poem 11, and Morgan 2010b, pp. 34-40, on poem 17.

of the other *poetae novi*, or even to their non-neoteric contemporaries such as Cicero and Lucretius. For example, the quick modal shifts possible in the hendecasyllable might well lend themselves to literary readings of poems like 55, the search for Camerius throughout Rome (and perhaps throughout different genres), and the mismatch in relationships in the elegiac couplets also applies to that meter's original use, elegy (as poem 101 on the death of Catullus' brother is perhaps the clearest example of a relationship out of balance in the corpus). Deeper study may well further cement the notion that Catullus and the other *poetae novi* were fully cognizant of and practiced in the interplay of meter and genre, and that the acknowledgement of this fact brings the modern reader incrementally closer to reading Latin poetry as the (educated, elite) Romans did.

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Education & Certification

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 M.A. in Philology & Classical Studies (University of Florida), 2005
 Thesis: *Relationship of Gender to Interiors and Exteriors in Euripides*
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Positions Held

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 Lecturer (Boston University), Summer 2010 – Fall 2010, Summer 2011 – Fall 2013, Summer 2014
 Editorial Assistant, *International Journal for the Classical Tradition*, Institute for the Classical Tradition (Boston University), Fall 2006 – Summer 2008, Summer 2009
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